MAIMONIDES

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BY

DAVID YELLIN

AND

ISRAEL ABRAHAMS

PHILADELPHIA

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PREFACE

THIS volume, published under the joint auspices of the Jewish Publication Society of America and the Jewish Historical Society of England, forms the first of a series of books dealing with "Jewish Worthies." The aim of this series is to present biographies of famous Jews, with special regard to the general history of the periods at which they lived. Thus in the present book Saladin is almost as much the hero as Maimonides.

The book has been the result of a somewhat unusual form of collaboration. Mr. David Yellin, a short time back, published in Hebrew a biography of Maimonides, which seemed to many worthy of translation into English. But his collaborateur found that it was prefer-

able to use Mr. Yellin's work in another way. Employing the Hebrew as his basis, he wrote, with Mr. Yellin's consent, a fresh biography in English, and the present volume is the result. It is in a very real sense the joint work of the two authors whose names appear on the title page.

The notes, which are intended for students, are all placed together at the end of the volume.

The authors cordially thank the Rev. S. Levy, M. A., and Messrs. G. W. Kilner, M. A., and C. G. Montefiore, M. A., for kindly reading the proofs.

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MOSES MAIMONIDES

CHAPTER I

Early Years in Cordova
1135-1148

The Cordova in which Maimonides was born on Passover Eve, 1135, was still the "Bride of Andalusia." But her spiritual charms had faded. In form she was as fair as when Abd-er-Rahman III had made her the pride of a Spanish Khalifate which rivalled and excelled the glories of Bagdad. The city of the first Omeyyad seems to have been at least ten miles in length. "The banks of the Guadalquivir," says Mr. S. Lane-Poole,[1] "were bright with marble houses, mosques, and gardens, in which the rarest flowers and trees of other countries were carefully cultivated, and the Arabs

introduced their system of irrigation, which the Spaniards, both before and since, have never equalled." Ez-Zahra was to Cordova what Daphne had been to Antioch under the Seleucids. The Moors were the spiritual heirs of the Hellenists; in their scheme of life all the faculties of body and soul were organically united. It is hard to judge the Cordova of old by its tawdry ruins of to-day. But the Great Mosque is still the wonder and delight of sightseers. Much of its beauty still remains. "Travellers stand amazed among the forest of columns which open out in apparently endless vistas on all sides. The porphyry, jasper, and marbles are still in their places; the splendid glass mosaics, which artists from Byzantium came to make, still sparkle like jewels on the walls; the daring architecture of the sanctuary, with its fantastic crossed arches is still as imposing as ever; the courtyard is still leafy with the orange-

trees that prolong the vistas of columns. As one stands before the loveliness of the great mosque, the thought goes back to the days of the glories of Cordova, the palmy days of the Great Khalif, which will never return."

If Cordova to-day, after ravaging centuries of strife and neglect, retains so much of her external comeliness, imagination easily brings back to us the impression which she must have made on a bright Jewish boy in the first half of the twelfth century. Maimonides was no poet, and he has left no record of his feelings. But, even when days of persecution dawned, he clung to Spain with a tenacity born of intense admiration and affection. The medieval Jewish poets write of the cities of Spain with an enthusiasm and tenderness such as no other city than Jerusalem ever evoked from the Hebraic muse. One may search in vain, in the writings of ancient Jews, with the exception

of Philo, for any similar eulogies of the Seleucid or Lagid centres of Hellenism. The origin of this love is simple. The Moor was Hebraic in his pure monotheism, his stern purpose, his devotion to the righteous ideals of life; he was Hellenic in his graces, in his culture. His Hellenism made him tolerant, his Hebraism imparted to him profundity. Thus, in her youth Cordova had been fair in mind as in form, and a noble soul had looked out from her alluring eyes. Not quenched, yet sadly dimmed, was this lovelight, when Maimonides was born in the city renowned for its manufactures, its arts, its schools, and its famous men. Cordova was the birthplace of Lucan, Seneca, and Averroës. In Abd-er-Rahman's days Cordova was the home of European culture. Poetry was innate in her people, and sweet songs were improvised by statesmen on their divans and by boatmen as they passed under the noble bridge whose

seventeen arches still span the "mighty stream" (Guadalquivir).

The combination of political sagacity and devotion to the muses cannot be bequeathed. It is the rare possession of rulers such as Marcus Aurelius, and though it has been more often found in Eastern monarchs, yet it is a personal possession, not an heirloom. The entail is for a single life. Abd-er-Rahman's son inherited one side only of his father's composite character. He was a bookman, not a statesman. He had no power to control the mixed races over whom he ruled. The failure of Islam as a conquering force is written in that last phrase. At no time was a Mohammedan host homogeneous in race or ideals. United under the stress of battle, the parts dissolved in the calm of victory. In Andalusia, what the khalifs lacked was for a brief space supplied by the Vizir Almanzor, merciless, subtle, "victorious by the grace of

God." When Almanzor died, and, as the monk said, "was buried in hell," Andalusia fell a prey to factions. For nearly a century the country was "torn to pieces by jealous chiefs, aggressive and quarrelsome tyrants, Moors, Arabs, Slavs, and Spaniards." One puppet khalif succeeded another, and revolution followed revolution, varying only in horror. The Christians of the north were not slow to take their advantage. The Christian reconquest of Spain had, in fact, begun on the morrow after Roderick's defeat and death in 711. The victory of Charles Martel at Tours in 732 had for ever stayed the stream of Mohammedan conquest in Western Europe. The Moors in Spain retained what Tarik had won, but their hold was weakened just when their foes grew stronger.

Alfonso VI and the Cid were carrying all before them, when a new influence made itself felt. From Northern Africa

had come the original conquerors of the Goths, and from the same region were now summoned the Berber saints, the Almoravids, under Yussuf, son of Teshfin. The second khalif of this dynasty, Ali (1106-1143), sat on the throne of Cordova when Maimonides was born. Valiant and uncouth, fitter for camp than for court, Yussuf again led the Crescent to victory. The Cid died in 1099, and Mohammedan Spain, Toledo excepted, became a province of the great African empire of the Almoravids. "The reign of the Puritans had come, and without a Milton to soften its austerity." Worse still, the Puritanism was unreal. The savage Berbers had no appreciation for the poets and savants who had previously basked in the royal favour. But they also lost their martial bearing, their manly endurance; they seized upon the material luxuries of Cordova without absorbing her refinement of ideals. Their very tolerance was

weakness. It needed the fanaticism of another African, Abdallah ibn Tumart, to rouse the Moors once more to a fiercer courage and a deeper, if more persecuting, piety. Till that happened, between 1145 and 1148, the country was worse off than it had been under the smaller tyrants from whom Yussuf had freed it. The Castilians resumed their raids into Andalusia, and under Alfonso the Battler, in 1133, the resolute Christian invaders burned the very suburbs of Cordova.

The internal fortunes of the Jews had shared none of these fluctuations. Steadily Cordova replaced the Babylonian cities of Sora and Pumbaditha as the headquarters of Jewish learning and authority. The centre of gravity of Judaism passed from Asia to Europe. The Jews of Andalusia enjoyed no monotony of sunshine, but having once realised the saving power of a Judaism allied to culture, the Spanish Jews never abandoned the ideal.

On the eve of their expulsion from Spain in 1492 their leader was just such another man as Chasdai had been in the tenth, and as Samuel the Nagid (Prince) had been in the eleventh century. Isaac Abarbanel well rounded off the line begun by Chasdai ibn Shaprut. The Moors had established a régime to which they were themselves faithless, but the Jews were loyal to it unto death. The Jews did not abandon or change their own ideals; they re-framed their own old picture, they acquired a new setting for their own priceless jewel. Judaism was not dependent for its vitality on Moor or Spaniard. In Germany and in France movements were already in progress which were destined to survive and control the Spanish influences on Judaism. But the fulness of life, represented by such names as Ibn Gabirol, Jehuda Halevi, and Abraham ibn Ezra on the one hand, and Chasdai, Samuel the Nagid, and Abarbanel on the

other, cannot be matched outside Spain. And the greatest of them all, the highest representative of the type, was Maimonides.

At one o'clock in the afternoon of March 30 (Nisan 14), 1135, Moses, son of Maimon, was born in Cordova. The very hour of his birth was thus treasured up in the loving memory of posterity. His genealogy has been traced to Judah the Prince, compiler of the Mishnah, and through him to the royal house of David. It is at least certain that he came of a family of scholars. He himself has recorded a modest yet honourable pedigree, describing himself as Moses, son of Maimon, *dayan* (official Rabbi, or "judge"), son of the learned R. Joseph, son of R. Isaac, *dayan*, son of R. Joseph, *dayan*, son of R. Obadiah, *dayan*, son of R. Solomon, son of R. Obadiah.[2] Of the boyhood of Moses we know little. Legend has been busy with him, and the story goes that the

child revealed but little of the man. But the contrast thus drawn between the dull, idle lad and the brilliant, industrious man is unfounded. The father, Maimon (*i. e.* Felix, Benedictus, or Baruch), was a scholar and a man of enlightenment, Talmudist, astronomer, and mathematician. Maimon (or Maimûn) was a disciple of Joseph ibn Migash (1077-1141), who had imbibed the spirit of Alfassi, and who had succeeded the latter as head of the school at Lucena. The poet, Jehuda Halevi, eulogised Ibn Migash in lavish terms, but the eulogy was well deserved. Maimon profited by his studies under this renowned teacher, composed commentaries on the Talmud, a work on the ritual, and expository notes on the Pentateuch. He influenced his son's mind profoundly, but in one respect father and child differed. "The son was not unemotional, but he was a philosopher first of all. The father is all enthusiasm, full of faith, longing

to dwell in the beautiful stories of Hagadah, not afraid of believing in angels, not desirous of making God an abstraction, or the apostle of God merely a deep thinker." He was gifted with a genius for allegory, and his images flow like a soothing stream over the reader's heart. His most famous work, the "Letter of Consolation," must have bound up many a wound, and filled with fresh courage those who despairingly feared that God had forsaken His world.

His son Moses grew up in this gentle and refined home, his mind and soul trained by a father who, amid the tribulations which were soon to follow, was upheld by the same confidence and trust which he sought to impart to others. Maimon's precept and example planted in his son's heart a pure and ineradicable veneration for all the tried and traditional virtues of the Jewish character. The Law and the Commandments were his de-

light. Not the less was this so because Maimon at the same time instilled into him a powerful inclination towards science and philosophy. In Maimon's home the stream of life ran broad and deep. What was Jewish, what was human, alike found a resting-place in the capacious soul of Maimonides. The Talmud was his chosen love. The works of Alfassi and of Ibn Migash were the eyes with which he penetrated into the Rabbinical lore. Equally devoted was the young scholar to the various sciences expounded by ancient Greeks, medieval Arabs, and Hebrews of all ages. Mathematics, philology, natural science, medicine, logic, and metaphysics, were included in the liberal education of the day, and all of these were the familiar friends of our hero's early manhood. Through the maze of these varied pursuits his keen, orderly intellect found a clear and straight path. Knowledge was not with him a more or

less confused amalgam of discordant or dissociated elements; it was one and indivisible. And he early learned the lesson, most precious to the genuine student, that "it is possible for a wise man to be taught by a fool." He saw the limitations of astrology, for instance, but he recognised the necessity of mastering its literature.

But not only in the acquisition and ordering of facts, in the awakening and development of his great intellect, did the youthful Moses grow under the hand of his father Maimon. In this formative period his character received the bent which marked it throughout life. Faith and Reason, simple piety and fearless inquiry, saintly self-abandonment to God and free examination of ethical sanctions and religious dogmas—these, which are commonly opposites, were blended in him into an inseparable unity. He was *perfect* with his God. He was faithful to the

Law of God as revealed in Scripture, and to the divine reason present in the human soul. He was true to the spirit of Judaism when he announced as the fundamental formula of his life the memorable imperative: "Know the God of thy father and serve Him." The tradition which binds the ages together, father to son, as knowers and servers of the same, changeless, eternal God is expressed in the phrase: "God of *thy father*." But something more is also conveyed. Knowledge and service: not obedience with blind eyes, not disobedience with penetrative gaze; but open-eyed obedience and service. An earnest sense that he was born to teach this truth to his own age and to posterity seems early to have forced itself upon him. It filled him with strenuous purpose, but it softened while it strengthened him. Not less of him than of Hillel could it be said that his gentleness, his even temper, his modesty, were

as conspicuous as his belief in himself and his mission, his giant-like intellect, his determination to make the truth prevail.

CHAPTER II

The Unitarian Persecution
1148-1159

The culture of the Almoravids was superficial, but the reaction which it provoked was deep-rooted. A profound suspicion roused to frenzy a new sect of Mohammedans who, like so many of other races and creeds then and since, saw in ethics the foe of æsthetics, and fancied that refinement of manners is synonymous with laxity of life. The Puritan movement in Islam had its origin and its headquarters in Northern Africa. When, in due course, the movement won its way to Spain, Andalusia was governed from Morocco. Hence the "Unitarians" (Almohades)—as the Puritans were called—obtained no real hold on Spain, and in 1212 the disastrous field of Las Navas decided their fate

for ever. The intervening half-century, during which the Almohades were supreme, was fraught with momentous consequence for Maimonides. The early trials to which he was subjected, the enforced change of domicile, the critical situations, saved him from becoming a mere philosophical recluse. He became a statesman as well as an author, a statesman not in the sense that he ever held a diplomatic post or wielded political power, but in the sense that his thought was brought into close relation with the real affairs of life. He was not a "man of the world," but his enduring influence may be traced in part to his large-minded deference to the actuality of things. His mind moved in the world of men, not in a mystic world of its own. His rough contact with men made of the foremost Jewish metaphysician of the middle ages the most practical codifier of Jewish law and custom. The midday sun rather than the

midnight lamp shines through all his work.

The founder of the Unitarian sect was Abdallah ibn Tumart, a man of great spiritual and personal magnetism, inspired at once by religious enthusiasm and political ambition. He conceived an Islam both pure and powerful; simple in the life it inculcated, world-wide in its dominion. The Koran and the sword, when both are forcibly wielded, make the most terrible combination that human history has ever witnessed. Ibn Tumart must not, however, be mistaken for an ignorant fanatic. Warring against luxury in living and dress, against poetry, music, and painting, his doctrine was a highly metaphysical expression of abstract Monotheism. The "Unitarian" Confession of Faith has been preserved, and it is necessary to cite it. The document illustrates the danger which ever threatens a spiritual Monotheism, the danger of becoming

Pantheistic. It also helps to explain how Jews during the Unitarian persecution could easily accept Islam as the price of their life or security, and, further, how it happened that Jewish public opinion could regard such apostasy as involving no disgrace. The Moslem belief in the Unity of God was as uncompromising as the Jewish, and in Ibn Tumart's expression of it was even freer from anthropomorphic suggestions. Had Judaism merely consisted of certain dogmas or formulæ, it is hard to see what could have enabled the Jews "to withstand the temptations to become followers of the Apostle of God in the latter half of the twelfth century." The following is Ibn Tumart's "Confession,"[3] which has some striking points of similarity with the medieval Synagogue Hymn of *Adon Olam*:—

In the name of God, the Most Merciful, the Most Gracious. May Allah lead us and you in the right path. Know ye, then, that it is abso-

lutely necessary for every Moslem to know that God, be he magnified and extolled, is One in his kingdom; that he is the creator of the whole Universe, the heights and depths, the throne, the heavens and the earth and all that is in them, and all that is between them. All creation is subject to his power. Not a mote is moved unless with his permission. He has no counsellor in his kingdom, no associate in the work of his creation. He is living and ever-existing. To him appertaineth not slumber or sleep. He knoweth that which is hidden and that which is seen. Nought on earth or in heaven is concealed from him. He knoweth that which is on dry land and that which is in the sea. Not a leaf falls to the ground unless he knows it, not a single grain in the darkest parts of the earth, neither a green thing nor a dry thing, that is not written in his clear book. He comprehends all things with his knowledge. He counts all things according to their number. He doeth all that he desireth. He hath power over all that he wisheth to perform. To him is the kingdom, to him belongeth wealth. To him is power and might. To him appertaineth eternity. To him belongeth judgment. He maketh his decrees. To him belong praise and adoration. To him belong the best names.[4] None can hinder that which he decrees. None can prevent that which he ordains. He doeth in his creation that which he desires. He hopes for no reward and fears no punishment. He is subject to no decree, to no judgment. All his favours to us are acts of grace. Every punishment he inflicts upon us is just. None can say to him: What doest

thou? but we can be asked as to our deeds. He was before all creation. Of him we cannot attribute any direction in space. He is not above us nor below us, not at our right hand nor at our left, not before us nor at our back. The words whole and part are inapplicable to him. It cannot be said whence he came or whither he goeth, or how he existeth. He is the former of space, the ordainer of time. Time does not contain him. Space does not hold him. No intelligence can grasp him, no intellect can comprehend him. No imagination can characterise him. No soul can form an image of his likeness. Nothing is like unto him. But still he hears and he sees. He is the tenderest of rulers, the most loving of helpers. Those who know him know him through his works; but they deny all limit to his greatness. However our imagination may conceive God, he the Exalted is different from our conception of him.

The moral reformation, dignified by this pure Monotheism, spread rapidly in Northwest Africa. When Ibn Tumart died, his disciple Abdulmumen was recognised as the Emir al-Mumenin, "Prince of the Faithful." Victory after victory was won, and the dynasty of the Almoravids was uprooted. The reformers were as intolerant of other religions as they were

of sectarianism in Islam. No Church and no Synagogue was the battle-cry of the Almohades. When Morocco fell into Abdulmumen's hands after a prolonged siege (1146), Christians and Jews were fellows in misfortune. To both was offered the alternative of death or apostasy. Under considerable pressure Abdulmumen so far modified his edict as to permit heretics to emigrate. Many availed themselves of the opportunity; but while the Christians were able to find an asylum in Northern Spain, no such refuge was open to the mass of the Jews. Many suffered martyrdom, but the majority assumed the disguise of Islam, hoping for better times. Fanatic as the Almohades were, they were much less skilful than the Inquisition subsequently proved itself in the matter of assuring the complete surrender of converts. To accept Monotheism, to profess belief in the prophetic inspiration of Mohammed, to attend the

Mosque on rare occasions, this constituted all that was expected of them. "In private, however, they practised the Jewish rites in all their details, as the Almohades employed no police spies to observe the action of the converts."

Two years later the Unitarians invaded Andalusia, and Cordova fell into their hands (May or June, 1148). The magnificent synagogues were destroyed. In Spain the Jews had developed an ecclesiastical art, inspired by Moorish models and originating in the same cause. In Islam art is invariably associated with architecture. The Jews in Spain were secure enough under Islamic rule to venture on ambitious architectural schemes. Now the choicest products of this art fell before the ruthless Puritans. The schools, too, at Seville and Lucena were dismantled. It seemed as though the splendid edifice of Jewish scholarship erected by Samuel the Nagid and

Isaac Alfassi was doomed to destruction. In Germany the Jews had already sunk to the position of body-slaves of the Emperor. In Northern France Rabbenu Tam had left no equal successor. The Provençal schools had not yet produced original masters, and the eminence of Toledo in Christian Spain was still to come. No one yet realised that, in the person of Maimonides, Spain in its hour of need had given birth to the man. Yet, unlike their brethren in Northern Africa, the great mass of Andalusian Jews refused to conform to the demands of the Almohades. A few offered lip-allegiance to Mohammed, but most preferred exile to apostasy even in outward show. Maimon belonged to the sterner group.[5] He cast no stones at the weaker brethren, but himself refused to bow down in the House of Rimmon. With his family he wandered hither and thither for several years, at first perhaps settling in

Port Almeria, but forced to retire thence when the Almohades captured the place in 1151. For eight or nine years we lose trace of Maimon, but we know that he remained in Spain without a permanent home or a settled position.

The young son of Maimon never, amid all these distractions, swerved from his ideals. In this formative period he laid the foundation of that mastery over the Rabbinical literature which he subsequently possessed to a unique extent. As he could not carry many books with him on his journeys, he was forced to make his memory his library, and to rely on his own stores. The Babylonian Talmud was not yet thoroughly interpreted; nor had the admirable commentaries of Rashi found their way from France to Spain. The scholars of the earlier middle ages, the "Geonim," had, as Maimonides himself writes, "made fitful attempts to explain the Talmud, but none of them

wrote a complete commentary, some being prevented by death, others by lack of leisure." Maimonides himself was destined to a similar fate. He designed a commentary on the whole Talmud, but his plan was not fully realised. Still he made much progress during this unsettled period of his life. He prosecuted his researches into the extant works of the Geonim, and collected the notes of his father and of his father's teacher, his own chosen model, Joseph ibn Migash. He originated besides collating. His practical bent at once revealed itself, for he commenced with those sections of the Talmud in which predominates the *halachah* (practical law), applicable to his own and to all times. Before he was twenty-three years of age he had finished his notes on many tractates (*massechtoth* of the "Orders," *sedarim*), Moed (festivals), Nashim (laws of marriage, etc.), and Nezikin (civil and

criminal law), and on the tractate Chullin (dietary laws). He explained the Talmud, not word by word, but in running paraphrase, often prefixing a statement of the general principle on which the Talmudic discussion was based. He made no display of painful ingenuity in meeting difficulties, but frankly confessed: "I do not see how to explain this matter." The Rabbi of old had counselled: "Teach thy tongue to say, I do not know," and both Rashi and Maimonides in their modest self-confidence were conspicuous in their obedience to this ancient advice. Besides this commentary on the Babylonian Talmud, Maimonides set himself to extract the practical *halachah* from the Talmud of Jerusalem, doing for the latter less-studied work what Alfassi had done for its better-known counterpart.

But the Talmud, though the first and chief object of Maimonides' devotion, was not his only love. Among his early works

was a short treatise on the Jewish Calendar (*Maamar ha-ibbur*).[6] This displayed no originality, but was a clear, scientific, systematic survey, written in Hebrew in 1158 in response to a request from a friend. Already his brethren were looking to him for solutions of their difficulties, and much of his more important work was similarly composed to satisfy the demands of correspondents. At about the same date he wrote a book on Logic (*Milloth Higgayon*), to which Moses Mendelssohn subsequently added a Commentary. The same year saw the initiation of the first of Maimonides' great trilogy. This was the *Commentary on the Mishnah.* In his Talmudic enterprise he had forerunners; in the new undertaking he was a pioneer.[7] The completion of the Commentary belongs to a later period of his life, but the fact that it was planned and begun in his early manhood deserves special note. "Confusion," he writes in his

introduction, "besets the student of the Mishnah. Until a man has closely read the Talmudical discussion, though he be the greatest of Geonim, he cannot understand the Mishnah. Now, in the Talmud, the discussion of a single *halachah* sometimes occupies four or five pages, for subject grows out of subject with arguments, objections, and replies; so that even when the Talmud has been mastered, the real significance of the Mishnah can only be grasped by a student skilled in clear thought. Moreover, for the explanation of one and the same *halachah* the reader must often refer to two or more tractates." The expositors of the Mishnah had previously treated Mishnah and Talmud, text and commentary, simultaneously; being more concerned to provide a clue to the intricacies of the latter than a light to the simplicity of the former. This was a grave critical mistake, and though Maimonides did not

regard the Mishnah from any other than the Talmudic point of view, still he realised that it was essential to treat the Mishnah (with which we must include the Tannaite elements in other Rabbinical compilations) in and for itself, if the Jewish Tradition was to be based on a sound historical foundation. His aim was, however, practical rather than critical. He loved and venerated the Rabbinical dialectics, but he felt that most men could not be expected to devote the necessary time to them. Brevity in place of prolixity, a clue to ancient mazes; to beginners an encouragement, to experts a work of reference, to all a better understanding of the tradition, and with it a release of the student's time and thought for other occupations besides the dialectics of the schools. This point will recur subsequently, and it will be necessary to discuss the extent to which Maimonides succeeded, and the inwardness of the op-

position which his motives aroused. The *Siraj*, or "Light" (Maor), for so the Commentary on the Mishnah was named, was not completed till 1168. But, as indicated above, it was begun in Spain. In the final words to the *Siraj* he refers to the conditions under which he started. "While my mind was ever troubled amid the God-decreed expatriations from one end of heaven to the other, I wrote notes on many an *halachah* on journeys by land, or while tossed on the stormy waves at sea." The latter phrase seems to refer to the voyages undertaken when he left Spain, and when subsequently he escaped from Fez. We must now follow him on his fortunes in various lands, until in 1165 he found a final home in the city about to become Saladin's Cairo.

CHAPTER III

Life in Fez
1160-1165

After enduring for more than ten years the perils and discomforts of a wandering life, Maimon resolved to emigrate from Spain.[8] Taking with him his daughter, his two sons Moses and David, he sailed for the Maghreb, "the Land of the West," and settled in Fez. Maimon and David engaged in commerce, while Moses devoted himself to his studies in theology and medicine. Maimon's motive for selecting Morocco as his new abode cannot be clearly ascertained. Fez was under the same rule as Cordova, and a "Moslem state for Moslems" was the watchword of the Unitarians in Africa as well as in Spain. There were parts of Christian Europe in which Maimon might have

found a tolerant if not a friendly reception. The saintly influence of Bernard of Clairvaux did not fade away when this "oracle of Europe" died in 1153. The second Crusade had been, on the whole, productive of a better feeling between the devotees of Church, Mosque, and Synagogue. But Maimon had grown old in a Moorish society, and would have felt himself a stranger to the language and habits of a Christian community. He had another reason for choosing Fez as his home. Neither he nor his son was personally known to the Mohammedan scientists of Morocco. Hence they would not be driven into the category of ordinary *anusim*, pseudo-converts to Islam under pressure of *force majeure*. They were not known as Jews to the local authorities, but in all probability they were commonly assumed to be Moslems. The evidence does not justify us in asserting that Maimonides ever did more than act a part of

tacit consent, though he has been suspected of a more positive conformity. That he joined in the *Tarawih* prayers during the month of Ramadan, or made any other serious ritual concessions to Islam, is improbable in itself, and is certainly not supported by adequate testimony.[9]

In a certain sense, the dual life that Maimonides passed in Fez chimed in well with the needs of his intellectual development. His close intercourse with Jewish scholars satisfied his eager desire for the further acquisition of Rabbinical learning, and his intimate acquaintance with Moslem literati stimulated his interest in science and philosophy. In Judah ha-Kohen ibn Shoshan, head of the Jewish community in Fez, he found a companion and guide in his researches into Jewish lore. During the five years passed in the Maghreb he made considerable progress with his Commentary on the Mish-

nah. On the other hand, he frequently refers in his later medical treatises to the experience gained among the Moslems of the Maghreb. The Unitarians (Almohades) were not foes to enlightenment. It is true that Ibn Tumart assailed the Moravid Khalif because his daughter appeared in public unveiled, because wine was drunk in defiance of the Koran, and the flesh of swine was offered for sale in open market. Yet the metaphysical tone of Ibn Tumart's *Tauhid*, or formula of Unity (p. 20 above), would have led us to expect that the new Puritanism was compatible with a genuine regard for science and philosophy. "There is no Church and no Synagogue in our land" ran the Moslem boast, but the vaunt did not add, "and there is no school." Well-known facts tally with this inference. "A man like Ibn Tofail, the author of the philosophical romance, *Hai ben Jokdan*, which has been translated

into Hebrew, Latin, Dutch, and English, and a man like Averroës during an important part of his life, flourished at the Court of the Almohades, though the latter in the end was banished." [10]

The double life of the ordinary Jew of Fez was not, however, without its dangers. Maimonides and the leaders of thought might remain absolutely true to their religious covenant, but commoner men could not but suffer from a continued yielding of lip-homage to Mohammed, occasionally supplemented by compulsory visits to the mosques, at which hymns and sermons were devoted to eulogy of the Prophet. Some of the Maghreb Jews began to persuade themselves that Islam was a God-sent substitute for Judaism, and that Mohammed had been born to replace Moses. It was to meet this danger that Maimon composed the "Letter of Consolation" to which reference has been made in a previous chapter.

Maimon's Letter was written in Arabic in 1159 or 1160.[11] The author argues that Israel's tribulations were a chastisement of love, the tender correction administered by a father to his wayward child, not the desolating vengeance of a potentate upon a rebellious favourite. Let no Israelite imagine that God had changed His plan, that Israel, His beloved son, is now cast off for another. "God does not desire a thing and then despise it; He does not favour and then reject." Where is the other religion in the midst of whose camp the divine Shechina patently dwells, where are the signs and the miracles? Maimonides was not at one with his father here; his confidence in Judaism was independent of miracles.[12] Maimon makes a stronger appeal on the basis of God's promises to Israel, which, like the Law itself, are of eternal and irresistible validity. "We must no more doubt God's promises than we doubt His

existence." He urges his brethren to a whole-hearted loyalty to their God. "What health can there be for him who is not whole with his Master?" He exhorts them to find salvation in spiritual communion with God; he would have them think less of this world's charm than of life everlasting; praying regularly, using, if need be, an abridged form of the liturgy, and the Arabic language, if Hebrew were unfamiliar; content with little materially, yet hoping for much spiritually. The Law of God was a Cord "stretched from earth to heaven," a sure rescue for those who, immersed in the sea of captivity, grasped at this unbreakable means of safety. Then, with noble charity towards those of his brethren who had lost firm hold of the Cord, Maimon said, "He who clings to it with his whole hand has, doubtless, more hope than he who clings to it with but part of it, *but he who clings on with the tips of his fingers has*

more hope than he who lets go of it altogether."

Coming from a foremost champion of a "legalistic" religion, this is one of the finest expressions of tolerance which medieval literature can show. The rest of Maimon's "Letter" is intensely interesting. His object is to maintain the permanence of the Jewish law and the greatness of the original lawgiver. He launches out into an extraordinary eulogy of Moses. "His creation was the evidence of the strength of God, for God created him in the most beautiful form. The light of God was clear in his face, a light more brilliant than the sun's, for the latter light was created, whereas the light of the face of our master Moses was from the light of the glory of God, which is uncreated. How magnificent were the eyes which gave forth a light which not Michael, or Gabriel, or the holy *hayoth* could look upon!" His body was purified like

that of the angels, yet was it stronger than theirs, "for those were of light, not of flesh or of blood, or of sinew or matter." "Moses was a prophet in whom was the strength of God." "If any one doubted the apostleship of Moses, his life was consumed like Korah's." Maimon freely uses Moslem phrases, and describes Abraham as "the Mahdi of God." His stress on the greatness of Moses is obviously meant "as a set-off to the greatness of Mohammed." "If the law which he promulgated had to be believed merely on account of Moses' greatness, it would still have been necessary to believe it; how much more must we believe it when that law contains the commands of the Creator and His ordinances. Gratitude and cleaving to God are necessary, on account of Him who sent and of him who was sent. And how great is the glory both of the sender and the apostle!" Maimon concludes his remarkable epistle with a detailed commentary

on the 90th Psalm, "The Prayer of Moses, the man of God." Maimon sees in this Psalm a forecast of Israel's vicissitudes. He applies it "not so much to the shortness of life as to the shortness of God's anger, and the ultimate deliverance from captivity." With exquisite fancy he turns the phrases of that noble Psalm to the contemporary condition of his people, and utters many an impassioned note of unconquerable confidence in the future restoration of Israel to its former place in God's regard. "O God, satisfy us in the morning of the dawn of our deliverance, and favour us with thy grace. . . . Grant thy redemption to draw near in our days, and establish in our time that which thou hast promised us; enlighten our darkness as thou hast assured us, and thy assurance is indeed sure. 'The Lord shall arise upon thee, and his glory shall be seen upon thee.' And so may it be God's will."

Maimon appeals throughout to sentiment, and sentiment is perhaps the best guide for an individual in such a case of conscience as presented itself to the Jews of his day. But when a community is internally lacerated by a life and death struggle, the only saving guides are reason and duty. It has been objected that while the father applied the principle of faith to the question of pretended apostasy, the son applied the principle of law. But when Maimonides took a severely legal view, he did so because he was fixing a norm for other men's conduct, not for his own. For himself he might adopt an ideal standard, but of others, speaking as the upright judge, he would require no more than the letter of the law. It is characteristic of Maimonides that he elected to participate in the solution of the difficulty just at the moment when it was placed on a practical basis. Maimonides' Letter does not lack feeling; he indulges

in unwonted invective, but its very strength lies in its patent repression of emotion. It appears that a Jew of the Maghreb, possibly resident in Fez, had applied to a foreign Rabbi for his opinion as to the conduct of Jews who saved their own lives and preserved their children for Judaism by uttering the formula, "La ilaha illa Allah, wa-Muhammad rasul Allah"—*There is no God but Allah, and Mohammed is the prophet of Allah.* Regardless of the effect of his reply on many thousands of his brethren, the armchair hero, to whom the appeal had been addressed, answered that a Jew who publicly confessed belief in Mohammed thereby denied God, for the Moslems were idolaters. The prayers of such a man would find no acceptance before God, his secret performance of all the Jewish precepts would be futile, and he could no longer be regarded as a Jew. The only course for a steadfast Israelite was to accept martyrdom rather than yield.

This opinion seems to have been widely circulated in the Maghreb, and one can well imagine the consternation produced by such an epistle, "turning men back from God." Some must have felt crushed under a burden of sin, more must have been tempted to conform in earnest to Islam, since they were denounced as apostates for an insincere secession from Judaism. Maimonides could not tolerate the injustice to which the Maghreb Jews were subjected by their critic, and he felt that his own conduct had been sufficiently like that of the rest of the local Jews to warrant him to associate himself personally in the charge. He does not deny that there was something to reproach in a policy of pretended submission. There is "genuine anguish" in this passage: "God is a witness that if he who has uttered these reproaches against us had uttered many more, we should not have sought help for ourselves; we should have said,

Let us lie in our shame, and let our confusion cover us, for we have sinned against the Lord our God. We know, O God, that we have done wickedly, and had it not been insisted upon that those who pray in these times are committing a transgression, we should have been silent. But will not the ignorant, if they hear that to pray is a sin, leave off praying altogether?" He opposed the zealot with his own weapons. He, too, appealed to precedent, and showed how in the past R. Meïr and R. Eleazar had saved their lives by feigning heathenism at a time of persecution. Then Maimonides develops a view which has not had altogether salutary effects on Judaism in subsequent centuries. "The present," he said, "differs from previous experiences. In former cases, Israelites have been called upon to transgress the Law in action. Now we are not asked to render active homage to heathenism, but only to recite an empty

formula which the Moslems themselves know we utter insincerely in order to circumvent a bigot." The distinction between conformity in speech and conformity in act saved many a Jewish community from extinction, but as a general principle it is untenable, and savours too strongly of casuistry. In the application of the principle to the case immediately before him, Maimonides is, however, perfectly sound. He places himself entirely at the Talmudic standpoint. The three capital offences which, the Talmud ordains, must be avoided even at the cost of martyrdom are idolatry, unchastity, and murder. "But now," continues Maimonides, " nothing of this is required. Indeed any Jew who, after uttering the Moslem formula, wishes to observe the whole 613 precepts in the privacy of his home may do so without hindrance. Nevertheless, if, even under these circumstances, a Jew surrenders his life for the sanctification of the name of

God before men, he has done nobly and well, and his reward is great before the Lord. But if a man asks me: Shall I be slain or utter the formula of Islam? I answer, Utter the formula and live."

Thus Maimonides drew back into the fold the weaklings whom a zealot would have cast forth into the desert of despair. He urged them to fortitude. He warned them against supposing that because they had strayed from the way of the Lord they were free to leave the path altogether. So, too, those who profaned the Sabbath must, he said, be treated not with contempt and rejection, but must be brought near and urged to reform. But he did not counsel a continuance of this yielding to coercion, nor justify quietism under persecution. "The advice I give to myself, to those I love, and to those who ask my opinion is that we should go forth from these places, and go to a place where we can fulfil the Law without com-

pulsion and without fear, and that we should even forsake our homes and our children, and all that we possess." Those who remain must regard themselves as partially, but not entirely, estranged from God so long as they are not compelled to transgress actively any of God's commandments. Should that be demanded of them, no consideration must weigh with them, no fear of the journey, no love for their home, but they must forthwith depart. Maimonides has no patience with those who would soothe their conscience by the thought that soon the Messiah must appear and lead them to Jerusalem, until which event there was nothing possible except submission.

Maimonides was about twenty-five years old when he wrote in Arabic this famous *Maamar Kiddush Hashem* ("Essay on the Sanctification of God"), known also as *Iggereth Hashemad* ("Letter concerning Apostasy").[13] It was his first in-

cursion into public life, and it placed him at a bound among the foremost authorities of the time. Henceforward men recognized in him a leader, at once statesman and enthusiast; and they sought a secure anchorage in his steadfast common sense and piety. Like a skilful physician who accurately diagnoses his patient's symptoms, at first he soothed the sufferer, then roused him to a sense of his condition. He saved Judaism from absorption into Islam in the Maghreb by persuading the pseudo-Moslems that they had not lost their inheritance in the God of Israel; but he followed this up by urging them to abandon their duplicity and live openly and whole with God. His effort was brilliantly successful, yet its very success occasioned new though more honourable dangers. The bolder spirit that now animated the Jews of Fez could not but translate itself into action easily detected by the Moslems.[14] These did not sit idly

by when the genius of Judaism reasserted itself. An inquisition was instituted. The crime of relapsing from Islam after conversion is punishable in Moslem law by death. Under that law *force majeure* is no admissible plea. Judah ibn Shoshan was seized and executed. For the moment Maimonides was saved from a similar fate by the intercession of his friend, a Moslem poet and theologian, Abul-Arab ibn Moisha. But his position was so hazardous that he resolved to leave the Maghreb.[15] In the darkness of the night (4th Iyar = 18th April, 1165) the family went on board a vessel bound for Palestine. For six days their voyage was calm, but on Saturday, the 24th April, a terrific storm assailed the vessel, and shipwreck seemed imminent. Then the danger passed, and Maimonides, after the manner of the time, solemnly vowed that he would annually observe the 4th and 10th of Iyar as fast days, "and as on this

occasion we were desolate and destitute of all succour but God's, so year by year on this day will I sit solitary, apart from all my fellow-men, to pour out my inmost soul before the Lord alone."

A full month was occupied by the voyage to Acre, which was reached on Sunday night, the 16th of May (3rd Sivan). As he himself joyously wrote: "On the 3rd of Sivan I arrived safe at Acco, and was thus rescued from apostasy." The anniversary was dedicated as a family festival, for whatever had really occurred to him in Fez, he could not but feel that his position there, amid a community of pseudo-Moslems, had been open to misconstruction. He remained in Acre for several months, recruiting his health both in body and soul, breathing in the ancient home of his people the air of freedom and sincerity. He was welcomed by the small Jewish community in what was then the chief sea-port of Palestine, and he enjoyed

the close friendship of the dayan, Japhet ben Eliahu. After the autumn festivals, he decided on paying a visit to Jerusalem. He arrived in the Holy City on the 17th October (6th Marcheshvan). Japhet accompanied him, and the party spent three days in visiting the sacred sites and praying at the Wailing Wall. On Sunday, the 9th Marcheshvan, they left for Hebron, "to embrace the graves of the Patriarchs in the Cave (of Machpelah)." The 6th and 9th of Marcheshvan were likewise observed in the family of Maimonides as festive anniversaries.

Palestine at that period was in Christian hands, the second Crusade having left the general situation unchanged. But few Jews were to be found there; the total did not exceed a thousand families, scattered in many cities. They were poor in goods and in culture, and Maimonides feared to settle in an environment which offered no intellectual comradeship for

him. Egypt promised a fitter field for his energies. Famous in Jewish history as the scene of the early career of Moses, later celebrated as the home of Philo, Egypt was now to receive a second Moses, who would again kindle in that land of human and divine marvels a light for the Jews of all the world.

CHAPTER IV

With Saladin in Cairo
1165-1174

When Maimonides reached Alexandria, the last of the Fatimid Khalifs sat on the throne of Egypt. Saladin, whose life (1138-1193) practically synchronises with that of Maimonides, had not yet come to Egypt, and it was uncertain whether the country was fated to remain in Moslem, or to fall into Christian, hands. Saladin was of Kurdish descent, and his rise was due to the service rendered by his father Ayyub to Zengy, master of Mosul. Nureddin, Zengy's son, was Saladin's immediate predecessor on the throne of Aleppo. As the Moslem hero of the second Crusade, Nureddin was second only to Saladin in fame among the champions of Is-

lam. Ayyub's younger brother, Shirkuh, was Nureddin's most trusted general. The diplomacy of Ayyub and the military genius of Shirkuh enabled Nureddin to occupy Damascus in 1154, and to realise Zengy's dream of a Syrian empire with its capital at Damascus. Till 1164 Saladin lived in obscurity at Nureddin's court, but when Shirkuh made his famous inroads into Egypt, Saladin accompanied his uncle, and soon found himself ruler of the land of the Pharaohs.[18]

The Fatimids, claiming descent from Fatima, Mohammed's daughter, had for two centuries forced their presence on the Egyptians. The Fatimids were heterodox (Shiites), the masses orthodox (Sunnites), but the khalifs of this line were powerful enough by land and sea to maintain their prestige and independence. Their luxury and their prodigality, however, eventually produced their inevitable effects. The last of the Fatimids

ruled from his harem. His Vizir Shawar coquetted with the Moslems and the Franks, seeking an alliance now with Nureddin in Damascus, now with Amalric in Jerusalem. In 1164 Shirkuh invaded Egypt, "a country without *men*," as the Moslem general reported to Nureddin. It took, however, some years before the Franks abandoned their hopes of winning supremacy in Egypt. By the year 1169 Shirkuh had triumphed, but within three months of his success he died, leaving the path free for his nephew. Saladin was immediately appointed Vizir, and remained master of Egypt, till the death of Nureddin in 1174 called him from Egypt to play a greater part in the world's drama. Saladin deserves all the honours that have been poured on his name by historians and romancers. "The popular conception of his character has not erred. Magnanimous, chivalrous, gentle, sympathetic, pure in heart and life, ascetic and labor-

ious, simple in his habits, fervently devout, and only severe in his zeal for the faith, he has been rightly held to be the type and pattern of Saracen chivalry." Rarely has history shown us in rivalry two such noble characters as Saladin and Richard Cœur de Lion. And the same epoch presents us with the most typical medieval product of Judaism. Like the champions of Christianity and Islam, but with other weapons, the Jew Maimonides was struggling for possession of the Mount of God.

The Jewish population of Egypt was considerable. In Alexandria, where Maimonides remained for some time, there resided about 3000 Jewish families, in Bilbeys 3000 individuals. In el-Kahira, New Cairo, 2000 Jewish families had their home; in addition another 1000 families were settled in Old Cairo (Fostat, or Misr). The Egyptian Jews enjoyed almost complete freedom, and under their own Nagid

(Prince) formed a community practically self-governed, so far as its internal affairs were concerned. Their position closely resembled the situation of the Jewish community in Persia. The Egyptian Nagid, like the Exilarch at Bagdad, had extensive disciplinary powers: he appointed Rabbis and Synagogue officials; he could punish offenders by fines and imprisonment. Spiritually, the condition of the Jews was less satisfactory than it was materially. There was little genuine devotion to the Law, there were few men of light and leading. Karaism was eating deep into the communal organisation. In the capital, the Karaites were probably for the moment more numerous than the Rabbanites; their political influence was certainly stronger. The adherents of the Karaite sect, it may be explained in passing, assumed an attitude of opposition to the Rabbanite tradition, and sought to govern their lives by the letter of

Scripture (Kara). To the Karaites was due not the foundation, but the development of a true Hebrew philology, and when the Bible became the battlefield of men like Saadiah and Japhet, the field was, at all events, very thoroughly trodden. Thus Biblical exegesis gained what the communal organisation lost. There was, moreover, much to admire in the independence and strength of character displayed by the Karaites, but their virtues have sometimes been exaggerated in order to deal an indirect blow at the mass of the Jews who have remained staunch to Rabbanism. Karaism was essentially reactionary, for starting with a profession of hostility to tradition it soon became itself nothing but a tradition, lacking the historical sanction and the fertilising spiritual vitality of the Rabbinical tradition which it sought to replace. The two sects were not rigidly separated, and intermarriages took place, sometimes on

terms of very remarkable tolerance between the contracting parties. Still the temporary supremacy of Karaism was a menace to the Judaism of Egypt, and none of the services which Maimonides rendered to the cause of Judaism won him so much approval as his success in gaining for the Rabbanites the upper hand in Egypt.[17] He won this victory by a policy of conciliation and firmness. He did not interfere with the friendly intercourse between the sects, on the contrary he held that Karaites might be visited in their homes, that Rabbanites might bury their dead, comfort their mourners, and initiate their children into the covenant of Abraham. He treated the Karaites as members of the family estranged; he sought not their annihilation, but their restoration to the family hearth. Weiss suggests that Maimonides' ruling passion for simplifying the Rabbinical exposition of Judaism was due to his desire to win

the Karaites back to their allegiance. He eliminated the Karaite customs that had crept into Rabbanite life, and resisted the authority and influence of the followers of Anan. But he won by love more than by hostility, and thus his triumph over Karaism in Egypt was what Ben Sira calls the most laudable of victories, for he destroyed his foes by converting them into friends.

To return to an earlier period, to the time of Maimonides' arrival in Cairo. He himself describes the condition of the community in a document dated 1167.[18] "In times gone by, when storms threatened us, we wandered from place to place; but by the mercy of God we have now been enabled to find a resting-place in this city. On our arrival we noticed to our great dismay that the learned were disunited; that none of them turned his attention to what was going on in the congregation. We therefore felt it our duty

to undertake the task of guiding the holy flock, of reconciling the hearts of the fathers to their children, and of correcting their corrupt ways. The mischief is great, but we may succeed in effecting a cure, and in accordance with the words of the prophet: 'I will seek the lost one, and that which has been cast out I will bring back, and the broken one I will heal.'" Practical effect was given to Maimonides' zeal, and henceforward he never allowed his interest in wider concerns to preclude a very real devotion to local affairs. One might rather say that his presence in Cairo transfigured local affairs into matters of world-wide moment. His livelihood was still derived from the business in precious stones, in which his brother David was the more active partner.[19] Nothing in all that Maimonides wrote exceeds in vehemence his denunciation of those who lived by their learning, and who served the Synagogue or the

school for gain.[20] He returns to the subject again and again; he would have colleges without revenues and teachers without salaries. His ideal was that of the old Mishnaic sages; the scholar, like the layman, must live from the toil of his hands. The change in Jewish life against which Maimonides protested was not widespread till the fourteenth century. Yet the change was inevitable. The demands of the community on its official heads became ever more onerous; the incompatibility between the Rabbinic office and trade was daily more keenly felt. Besides, the practice of medicine required little scientific training in the twelfth century, and Rabbis (like Maimonides himself a little later in his life) could double the parts of the healer of body and soul. But the great medieval universities established a higher standard of qualification, and the medical profession soon required an undivided devotion. Theology, too,

became more absorbent of a man's whole mind and heart, and the Rabbinical function demanded all that a man had to give. Still it is a pleasing thing to contemplate the Rabbi of Cairo, like the Sage of Amsterdam, pursuing his intellectual career under the influence of utterly unsordid motives.

Soon after his arrival in Egypt, Maimon died. This was not the only sorrow that now visited our hero. A spirit less resolute than his must have been broken by the succession of misfortunes which befell him. "Physical sufferings threw him on a bed of sickness; heavy losses diminished his fortune; informers appeared against him, and brought him to the brink of death." We here have the echo of incidents in Fez, and it is certain from Maimonides' own testimony that at a later period he stood in serious danger from the injurious charges of informers. The final blow fell when his brother David

perished in the Indian Ocean, and with him was lost not only their own capital, but also the money placed with the brothers by other traders. The loss of his brother affected him sharply and enduringly. He did not recover from the blow for many years, and his letter to his friend Japhet, written long after the catastrophe, bears touching witness to the close sympathy that had united the brothers.[21] "It is the heaviest evil that has befallen me. His little daughter and his widow were left with me. For a full year I lay on my couch, stricken with fever and despair. Many years have now gone over me, yet still I mourn, for there is no consolation possible. He grew up on my knees, he was my brother, my pupil; he went abroad to trade that I might remain at home and continue my studies; he was well versed in Talmud and Bible, and an accomplished grammarian. My one joy was to see him. He has gone to his eternal

home, and has left me confounded in a strange land. Whenever I come across his handwriting or one of his books, my heart turns within me, and my grief reawakes. I should have died in my affliction but for the Law, which is my delight, and but for philosophy, which makes me forget to moan."

After the death of his brother, Maimonides abandoned commerce in favour of medicine as a means of earning his livelihood. His fame as a physician belongs to a later period in his career. At first he was an unknown man, and his practice was not extensive. Alkifti informs us that he gave public lectures on philosophical subjects, but neither his medical nor his tutorial pursuits kept him from occupying his mind with the completion of the work which he had begun in Spain in his twenty-third year, and had spasmodically continued by land and sea during the vicissitudes of his troubled life.

The year 1168 witnessed the completion of the *Siraj* (Hebrew, *Maor*), or "Light," as the "Commentary on the Mishnah" was named. The fate which marked its inception accompanied the work to its close. Begun amid danger, the *Siraj* was finished in turmoil. For in 1168 Fostat, his new home, was the scene of the final conflict in the struggle between Amalric and Shirkuh for the mastery of Egypt. The King of Jerusalem had alienated the Egyptians by a wholesale massacre at Bilbeys, and the dilatoriness of the Christian advance gave the people of Cairo an opportunity to make heroic preparations. "The old city of Fostat, for three hundred years the metropolis of Egypt, and still a densely populated suburb of Cairo, was by Shawar's orders set on fire, that it might not give shelter to the Franks. Twenty thousand naphtha barrels and ten thousand torches were lighted. The fire lasted fifty-four days, and its traces may

still be found in the wilderness of sand-heaps stretching over miles of buried rubbish on the south side of Cairo. The population re-occupied the burnt city to some extent for a century, and its final abandonment and demolition dates from the reign of Beybars."[22] Cairo, despite this destruction of its oldest suburb, was soon to be made greater and nobler than ever. The Fatimids had relied for security on their fortified palace in the plain. With his military genius Saladin saw that the extension of the city to the northeast was dangerous. He chose the most western spur of Mount Mukattam for a new citadel, the famous "Castle of the Mountain," the view from which, over Nile and desert, dotted with Arab mosques and Pharaonic pyramids, still affords one of the most magnificent prospects in the world. From the citadel may still be seen traces of the new pleasure-gardens with which Saladin beautified the city. Fostat itself,

which lay southwest of the citadel and close to the Nile, was to be included within Saladin's fortifications. This part of the plan was abandoned, and now very little is left of the old site. But the synagogue, standing near soil which, though close to the ancient Fostat, has been recovered from the river since Maimonides' day, has recently brought the place to fame once more. For there is situate the *Geniza*, or buried treasury, from which so many lost gems of Hebrew literature have been recovered. The so-called Maimonides Synagogue is not in Fostat at all, and has no authentic connection with Maimonides. The Geniza is Cairo's most famous Jewish relic of the medieval ages, but England has spoiled the Egyptians, and Cambridge rather than Fostat now holds a large part of the Jewish treasures from the banks of the Nile.

CHAPTER V

The "Siraj"—Commentary on the Mishnah

1168

The fame of the *Siraj* has been eclipsed by the maturer works of its author, yet it presents in germ the main ideas which he afterwards developed. Again, the Commentary of Maimonides has not been so popular an aid to the study of the Mishnah as the useful but more commonplace work of a later expositor, Obadiah of Bertinoro. So high a modern authority as Strack pronounces the commentary of Maimonides indispensable for the study of the Mishnah, and at the present time the importance of the *Siraj* is fully recognised. Maimonides wrote his *Siraj* in Arabic, and among the contemporaries of the author some actually preferred the

Siraj to the great Code (the *Mishneh-Torah*), for the very reason that the former was composed in Arabic, the vernacular spoken by a large section of Jews. A good deal of the *Siraj* was also translated into Hebrew during the lifetime of Maimonides, and the desire for a complete Hebrew version was widely felt.[23] The *Siraj* has had a great and deserved influence on Jewish theology. "Clearness, method, symmetry," are the qualities which Graetz detects in the *Siraj*. "The construction of the Talmud," writes the same historian, "seems opposed to an orderly arrangement." But Maimonides demonstrated that this absence of system is a superficial defect. The Talmud readily lends itself to codification, given the qualifications which Maimonides pre-eminently possessed, an easy mastery over the subject-matter, and a sound conception of logical method. In these respects Maimonides stands supreme. As

Simeon Duran said of him: "His like has not existed for bringing things close to men's understanding."[24] He had a profound reverence for the Talmud, and applied to the Rabbinical tradition the Scriptural text, "Thou shalt not add to it nor take away from it." But he maintained that not everything enshrined in the Rabbinical literature deserves to be taken literally or to be regarded as "traditional." Sometimes he dissents from the Talmudical explanations of the Mishnah, even, according to Weiss, in cases where the *halachah*, or practical law, is affected.[25] His respect for authority was tempered by a belief in his own powers, especially when dealing with the decisions and explanations of his nearer predecessors. Again, we find Maimonides attaching great importance to the Agadic elements in the Rabbinical literature as sources of ethical and philosophical truth. The process of reading an esoteric mean-

ing into these elements as well as into certain features of Scripture was carried out more fully in the "Guide of the Perplexed," the last great work of our author. But the idea had already taken firm hold of Maimonides. "In the (allegorical) discourses of the Talmud," he writes in his *Siraj*, "lies much profound teaching. Let a man get a thorough intellectual insight into these discourses, let him realise the hidden store of true good therein contained, beyond which there is nothing more excellent, then will be revealed to him matters of divine truth, and much that the philosophers have spent their lives in searching for. But the sages hid these things, and desired not to reveal them openly, so that the mind of the student might be sharpened, and so that these matters might remain a secret from those whose intellect was inadequate to receive truth in its purity." Maimonides, with an analysis

which applies also to our own day, discriminates[28] among three classes of those who study the words of "our sages of blessed memory." The first class take everything in its literal sense, and eulogise the sages for the very things which bring them into obloquy; the second class, again accepting everything as literal, pour ridicule on the Rabbis; the third class ("so small," says Maimonides, "that we can scarcely term them a class") hold the Rabbinical utterances in the deepest reverence, but understand that there is an exoteric and esoteric, an open and a hidden sense, in the words of the Rabbis. Thus Maimonides was already preparing himself to take the lead in medieval scholasticism and to found a philosophy of religion on a basis, at first unconsciously, yet in the end essentially, constructed on a syncretism between Greek metaphysics and Hebrew revelation.

Besides gathering into a short compass

the quintessence of the Talmud, he displays his originality, says Dr. Friedländer,[27] "in the Introduction, and in the treatment of general principles, which in some instances precedes the exposition of an entire section or chapter, in others that of a single rule. The commentator is generally concise, except when occasion is afforded to treat of ethical and theological principles, or of a scientific subject, such as weights and measures, or mathematical and astronomical problems. Although exhortations to virtue and warnings against vice are found in all parts of his work, they are especially abundant in the Commentary on Aboth, which is prefaced by a separate psychological treatise, called 'The Eight Chapters.' The dictum, 'He who speaketh much commits a sin,' elicited a lesson on the economy of speech; the explanation of *olam ha-ba* [the future world] in the treatise Sanhedrin, led him to discuss the

principles of faith, and to lay down the Thirteen Articles of the Jewish Creed." These excursuses, though incidental, were not *obiter dicta*. The author insists again and again that they are the result of wide research and long and careful thought. He demands of his readers the same diligence in perusal that the author had expended in composition. The general introduction to *Tohoroth* is pronounced by Frankel a masterpiece.

It is necessary to linger a little over two of the excursuses alluded to in the foregoing excellent summary. Of the psychological excursus, known as "The Eight Chapters,"[28] it may be said that it is the most remarkable instance in medieval ethical literature of a syncretism between Hebraism and Hellenism. It is thoroughly Jewish in thought; it is Hellenic in form. It is a treatise on the health and sickness of the soul; on the means by which the sickness may be

transformed into health. "Ethics are the medicine of the soul," the Greek scientific view, and "All thine actions shall be to the glory of God," the ancient Mishnaic conception, are the texts on which Maimonides discourses. It is in the fourth of "The Eight Chapters" that we come across the famous attempt of Maimonides to apply to Jewish ethics the Aristotelian doctrine of the *Mean*. As far back as Hesiod, *μέτρια ἔργα* are the object of praise, and over the temple of Delphi was inscribed the motto, *Μηδὲν ἄγαν*. In the Greek the moral sense, like the musical ear, is satisfied by harmony. If virtue be harmony, beauty in action, then Aristotle's *Μεσότης* (*Mean*) perfectly expresses the principle of virtue. Excess and deficiency lie at the two extremes, and each is evil; between them runs the Mean, which is the Good. Virtuous action is a balance, the virtuous soul is symmetrical, graceful. Thus the principle of Ethics

is the same as that of Art, though, as Aristotle puts it, "Moral Virtue is finer than the finest Art." "That beauty constituted virtue," writes Grant,[29] "was an eminently Greek idea. If we run through Aristotle's list of virtues, we find them all embodying this idea. The law of the *Μεσότη*, as exhibited in bravery, temperance, liberality, and magnanimity, constitutes a noble, free, and brilliant type of manhood. Extend it also, as Aristotle does, to certain qualifications of temper, speech, and manners, and you have before you the portrait of the graceful Grecian gentleman." The doctrine of the Mean, however, fails to explain the relation of the will to morals. It offers no explanation of the "impulse to truth—the duty of not deceiving." Nor can it be said that the peculiarly Hebraic virtues, unrecognised as such by Hellenism—humility, charity, forgiveness of injuries—are explicable by the theory of the

Mean. In the Jewish "Wisdom of Solomon" the idea of beauty is applied to wisdom, but no Jewish moralist could be content with beauty as a full theory of ethics. If, continues Grant, we ask whether these peculiarly Hebraic (Grant calls them Christian) qualities are mean states, "we find that they are all beautiful; and, in so far as that, they all exhibit a certain grace and balance of the human feelings. There is a point at which each might be overstepped: humility must not be grovelling, nor charity weak; and forgiveness must at times give place to indignation. But there seems in them something which is also their chief characteristic, and which is beyond and different from this quality of the Mean. Perhaps this might be expressed in all of them as 'self-abnegation.' Now here we get a different point of view from which to regard the virtues, and that is the relation of Self, of the individual Will, of the mor-

al Subject, to the objective in the sphere of action. This point of view Aristotle's principle does not touch. *Μεσότης* expresses the objective law of beauty in action, and as correlative with it the critical moral faculty in our minds, but the law of right in action as something binding on the moral subject it leaves unexpressed. . . . . *Μεσότης* expresses the beauty of good acts, but leaves something in the goodness of them unexpressed." This criticism, however, does not apply to Maimonides, however effective it be against Aristotle. Maimonides, it is true, describes all virtues as mean states, but his list of virtues is derived not from his metaphysics but from Scripture. Scripture is the ultimate source of well-doing; it is to the Scriptural virtues that Maimonides applies the doctrine of the *Μεσότης*, not as explaining their intent but as defining and limiting their content. Critics of Aristotle are inclined to

forget that the doctrine of the Mean is at all events an instrument for the analysis of moral concepts, and that such an *analysis* has real ethical value. It cannot be doubted that to Judaism, at all events, this analysis was salutary and needful. In Maimonides' hands the law of the Mean becomes a valuable ethical corrective; he uses it in behalf of a sane piety, and urges the avoidance of those excesses of pietism which tend to convert virtue into a disease. It is no pallid, colourless character that Maimonides conceives as the ideal. His is a strenuous standard; but it is righteousness, not over-righteousness that he preaches. Yet disease may need poison to remedy it. So, he explains, the cure of a spiritual deficiency may consist in a spiritual excess, and for a great moral reformation it may be imperative to pass from extreme evil to extreme good, so that finally the Mean may be recovered and firmly held. The

Greek law of beauty would require, as its correlative, a law of necessary deformity. Morality is not so much harmony as adjustation.[30]

"Every Israelite has a share in the world to come," runs a Mishnah in Tractate Sanhedrin. But who is an "Israelite," and what is the "life to come"? These questions suggested to Maimonides the desirability of examining current conceptions of immortality, and forced upon him the duty of formulating the ultimate doctrines, belief in which made the Israelite. The essay in which Maimonides attempts to solve these problems is unquestionably the most significant section of the *Siraj*.[31] He opens with the lament that many take a material view of eternal bliss, conceiving it as a Garden of Eden, where flow rivers of wine and spiced oils; and men, free from toil, inhabit houses built of precious stones, and recline on silken couches. Hell to them is equally

materialised, as a place of burning fires and bodily torments. Others, again, attach their hopes of bliss to the conception of an approaching Messianic Age, in which men will be as kings, living eternally, gigantic in stature, provided by a bountiful earth with garments ready woven and meats ready baked. A third class rest their hopes on the Resurrection, believing that a man will be in a happy state if, after his death, he live again with his dear ones and household, eating and drinking, but never again dying. Yet others hold that the good derived from obedience to the divine law consists in earthly happiness, and that earthly misery and "captivity" result from disobedience. A fifth class, a very numerous section, combine all these ideals, holding as their ideal that Messiah will come, and will quicken the dead; that they will enter the Garden of Eden, and eat there and drink, healthy throughout eternity. All

of these base their views, in part successfully, on Scripture and Tradition, but they succeed by interpreting literally texts that need to be explained as figures. The real marvel and mystery, the whole conception of a future world, they do not attempt to examine. They rather ask, "How will the dead arise?—naked or clothed? attired in the embroidered shrouds in which they were interred, or dressed in simple garments to cover their flesh?" As to the coming of the Messiah, they are concerned with such questions as, "Will all men, rich and poor, be equal then? Or will one be strong and another weak?" Now a wise teacher attracts the child by nuts, and figs, and honey; for the child cannot appreciate the real purpose of his studies. As the pupil grows older, the reward must change, and the nuts having palled, the teacher must charm with fine shoes and dainty apparel. Later he will offer more

substantial bribes, such as money; later still he will say, Study to become a *dayan*, to win men's respect, that the people may rise before thee as they do before such and such a one. But can a man of character and intellect be satisfied with this? Is the end of wisdom to be found except in wisdom itself? Shall man learn except to win truth, or obey the Law for any motive except obedience? Man must study the Law simply to know it, seeking truth for truth's own sake, and knowing in order to perform. It is unlawful to say, I will follow the good to win reward, and eschew the evil to escape punishment. Maimonides is very forcible in maintaining this view, and cites with affectionate approval the saying of "that perfect man, who reached the truth of things," Antigonus of Socho, whose utterance has ever since been the key-note of the higher Judaism: "Be not like servants who minister to their master upon

the condition of receiving a reward; but be like servants who minister to their master without the condition of receiving a reward." Maimonides follows this up by several apt quotations in which Rabbinical sages inculcated "service from motives of love towards God," especially the famous comment of R. Eleazar on the text, "In His commandments he delights exceedingly," "In His commandments, not in the rewards for them, he delights," and the equally famous saying in the Sifri, "All that you do must be done for pure love of the Lord." What then of the offers of reward and threats of punishment?

Maimonides answers by the theory which he subsequently developed in explanation of the Sacrifices. A concession was necessary to the average man, who is incapable of such pure devotion, but needs a specific stimulus, just as the schoolboy does from his teacher; but the concession

was a means to an end, the end being the attainment of such a spiritual exaltation in which the love of good will be the sole stimulus to good, and the ideal will be realised in a perfect knowledge of the divine truth. Let men, said the Rabbi, serve God at first for reward; they will end by serving Him without any such motive. Thus the concession is educational. But Maimonides carries the argument farther. The material rewards prescribed in Scripture were aids to virtue rather than payment for it. "When a man is sick, hungry, thirsty, or at war, he cannot obey the ordinances of God. The object of reward for obedience is not that the land shall be fat, and men live long and healthily, but that these blessings shall help them to perform the law, while the penalties of disobedience are penalties only in this, that man by his very sin is rendered incapable of serving God. "If (Maimonides puts this into God's mouth)

thou performest part of a single ordinance from love and desire, I will help thee to perform all ordinances, and will ward off all obstructive ill; but if thou leavest one thing undone from motives of contempt, I will bring on thee consequences which will prevent thee from obeying the whole law." Now it may be that Paradise will give to the righteous all that men dream of delight, and more; and Gehenna may be a fiery torture for the wicked. The days of the Messiah will fulfil all that the prophets have prophesied, and Israel will regain the sovereignty and return to their land. But our hope in the Messiah is not made up of dreams of wealth or hopes of Eden—a dream of bliss to spur us to righteousness. Eternal bliss consists in perfect spiritual communion with God. "He who desires to serve God from love must not serve to win the future world, but he does the right and eschews the wrong because he is man, and

owes it to his manhood to perfect himself; and this effort brings him to the type of perfect man, whose soul shall live in that state which befits it, viz., in the world to come."

Maimonides follows up this striking pronouncement by a formulation of the thirteen fundamental principles of Judaism: (1) Belief in the existence of a Creator; (2) Belief in His Unity; (3) Belief in His Incorporeality; (4) Belief in His Eternity; (5) Belief that all worship and adoration are due to Him alone; (6) Belief in Prophecy; (7) Belief that Moses was the greatest of all Prophets; (8) Belief in the Revelation of the Law to Moses at Sinai; (9) Belief in the Immutability of the Law; (10) Belief that God knows the acts of men; (11) Belief in Reward and Punishment; (12) Belief in the Coming of the Messiah; and (13) Belief in the Resurrection of the Dead. "The great majority of Jews," says Professor Schech-

ter,[82] "accepted the Thirteen Articles without further question. Maimonides must indeed have filled up a great gap in Jewish theology, a gap, moreover, the existence of which was very generally perceived. A century had hardly elapsed before the Thirteen Articles had become a theme for the poets of the Synagogue. And almost every country where Jews lived can show a poem or a prayer founded on these Articles. R. Jacob Molin (1420) of Germany speaks of metrical and rhymed songs in the German language, the burden of which was the Thirteen Articles, and which were read by the common people with great devotion. The numerous commentaries and homilies written on the same topic would form a small library in themselves." Though, however, the Thirteen Articles have been received into the Synagogue ritual in two separate forms,[83] they have not been accepted without criticism. Maimonides apparently consid-

ered the Articles as dogmatic tests, and in a very peculiar sense. "If a man believes these Articles," he writes, "he is included in the category of Israelite, and it is a duty to love him. Should he be led to commit transgressions by the urgency of his lust and the dominance of his lower nature, he will be punished for his offences, but he has a share in the future world. If, however, he rejects any of these Articles, he has withdrawn himself from the category of Israelite; he has denied the principles of Judaism, he is a heretic and unbeliever, a lopper of the tree, and it is a duty to hate him and destroy him." Maimonides was the first Rabbanite Jew to attempt such a formulation of the creed of Judaism, and he did it at a period when the Jews had long ceased to possess any central authority qualified to promulgate dogmatic tests. Neither Papacy nor Church Council was available, but Maimonides was not free

from the intolerance which sometimes presided over both. Chasdai ibn Crescas in his "Light of God" (1405) contended that "Maimonides confounded dogmas or *fundamental beliefs* of Judaism, without which Judaism is inconceivable, with beliefs or *doctrines* which Judaism inculcates, but the denial of which, though involving a strong heresy, does not make Judaism impossible." But much of the criticism of Chasdai is really irrelevant. Maimonides himself was far more tolerant in spirit than he represents himself. When Chasdai objects that Reward and Punishment, Immortality and Resurrection, "must not be considered as the basis of Judaism, since the highest ideal of religion is to serve God without any hope of reward," he is only repeating the remarks of Maimonides cited above. Again, Chasdai points out that the Immutability of the Law is not a dogma, for "the perfection of the Torah could only

be in accordance with the intelligence of those for whom it was meant; but as soon as the recipients of the Torah have advanced to a higher state of perfection, the Torah must also be altered to suit their advanced intelligence." Maimonides, as we shall see, practically held the same view, for he claimed the right so to *explain* certain words of Scripture as to convert them into a new Scripture. Hence, though at the first blush it would seem that Maimonides set up rigid dogmatic tests to be applied with intolerant severity, yet in effect he placed no heavy trammels on the Jewish intellect and conscience. He did a real service to Judaism by re-establishing *belief* as the basis of *conduct*, and his words, "inlaid with pearls," made the spiritual conception of the divine nature and the divine law predominant for all time in Jewish theology.

CHAPTER VI

The Change of Dynasty

In March, 1169, the Fatimid Khalif chose Saladin as the least dangerous of all the Syrian captains, and invested him with the mantle of Vizir. Saladin now threw off his old diffidence and vacillation; the real man stood revealed, to the surprise of friend and foe. "When God gave me the land of Egypt," said Saladin, "I was sure that he meant Palestine for me also." Thus he devoted himself to the Holy War, and vowed himself the champion of Islam. Saladin's position was for some years a difficult one. He was the Vizir of the heretical (Shiite) Khalif of Egypt, and the military representative of the orthodox (Sunnite) ruler of Damascus. Thus Saladin's policy was to avoid offending the religious susceptibilities of the masses

in Egypt, or arousing the suspicions of his master Nureddin. The struggle with the black Sudanese partisans of the Fatimids was an obstinate contest, for these kept Egypt in a state of unsettlement for six years. Saladin, however, made short work of the Sudanese in the capital, and Cairo was freed from them in 1169. More formidable was the attack of the Crusaders, who, like Saladin, perceived that Egypt was the key to Palestine. But Amalric's attempt on Damietta was frustrated, though his machina, or fighting tower, rose seven stories high. In 1170 Saladin assumed the offensive, and making a raid on Gaza initiated the "series of attacks which continued until his treaty with Richard of England, twenty-two years later."[84]

These successes so firmly established Saladin's authority that Sunnites and Shiites alike accepted him as their champion. In 1171 Saladin took the bold step

of deposing el-Adid, the last of the Fatimids, who lay dying at the moment, and was not informed of his fall. Of the priceless treasures which he discovered in the abode of el-Adid Saladin retained nothing for his personal use; he did not even take up his residence in the famous twin palaces of Cairo. Nureddin could not but feel alarmed at the growing power of his Egyptian lieutenant, and it needed all Ayyub's sagacity and tact to lull the suspicions entertained by the King of Syria against Ayyub's son. More than once Nureddin seriously thought of attacking Saladin, but his death in 1174 occurred before he had given effect to any such resolve. From 1174 till his death in 1193 Saladin's supremacy was unquestioned.

During the intervening years Saladin's firm hand preserved Cairo from disorder after the bloody fight with the blacks in the very courtyards of the palace. But until Nureddin's death Saladin was never

free from a sense of insecurity. Thus he was always looking abroad for an asylum to which to flee, should he be driven from Egypt by the lord of Syria. Among the various spots on which his eyes rested was one which now enters more closely into the career of Maimonides. Yemen, famed in ancient times as Arabia Felix, bounded on the west by the Red Sea, had filled an important place in the world's commerce from the reign of Solomon to the days of Cyrus. Romance added its charms to the land, and its Queen of Sheba still lives in history and myth. Later on the cupidity of Rome led to the expedition of Gallus in the Augustan age. Then for some centuries the country was the scene of a struggle for supremacy between Judaism and Christianity. Islam, seeing that Mecca was situate on the northern border of Yemen, stepped in and snatched the prize from its older rivals. Saladin, until he sent his elder brother

Turin Shah to Yemen, in 1174, had but a weak hold there. The power was locally in the hands of a Shiite Mahdi, who like the Unitarians in Morocco associated their purer monotheism with a fanatical hostility towards every other creed than their own. Where Saladin really ruled, justice was enjoyed by all his subjects. In Cairo the Jews were prosperous, influential, and self-governed. But in Yemen persecution and not Saladin held sway. The old experience of Fez repeated itself. Offered the alternative between Islam and punishment, many became Moslems, at first outwardly, but they soon exchanged appearance for reality. It was even argued by a Moslem, formerly a Jew, that Mohammed was alluded to in the Bible, and the old argument was revived that Islam had superseded Judaism. "A Mahdi in Islam," says Mr. L. M. Simmons, "was often accompanied by a Messiah in Judaism." "To add to the dangers

of the moment," writes Graetz, "there appeared a Jewish enthusiast in Yemen who proclaimed himself to be the forerunner of the Messiah, endeavoured to instil in the Jews the belief that their affliction was the harbinger of the speedy approach of the Messianic empire, and bade them hold themselves in readiness for that event and divide their property with the poor. This enthusiasm, to which many clung as drowning men to a straw, threatened to bring the direst misfortunes on the heads of the Yemenite Jews. The pious abandoned themselves to despair in the contemplation of these proceedings, and altogether lost their heads." The pseudo-Messiah here alluded to was not David Alroy, though the two impostors were contemporaries.

One of the best representatives of the Yemenites, Jacob of Fayyum, appealed to Maimonides in this crisis. In response he despatched his celebrated "Letter to the

South" (*Iggereth Teman*), also known as the "Gate of Hope" (*Petach Tikvah*).[35] It was written in Arabic, but there are three distinct Hebrew translations of it. It was indeed a message of hope. Persecution, he argued, was in one sense a tribute to the presence of God in the camp of Israel, "Nations envy us our possession of the Law. They contend not with us but with God." Israel had been assailed in three forms: by the sword of Nebuchadnezzar and Titus; by the charm of Hellenism; by Christianity and Islam in the mask of new revelations. This last was the subtlest attack, for the Sinaitic revelation was declared true, but superseded. Maimonides now warned the Yemenites against exchanging a living body of flesh and blood for a beautiful inert statue, which resembled the living model, but lacked heart and soul. Persecutions would never cease, but, continued Maimonides, "*Israel cannot be destroyed.*" He argued, taking a

different line from his father Maimon, that even if all the miracles of Jesus were proved, he still would not be the Messiah. Jews must judge not by the prophet, but by the prophecy. "Judaism does not found its truth upon its miracles, but upon the historical fact of the revelation at Sinai." The whole moral of the "Letter to the South" lay in the words, "Be strong." The Messiah will come, but his advent must not be calculated.[86] Certainly he will be as unlike the pretenders in Ispahan and Yemen as it is possible to conceive. Persecution is a trial of faith and love. "Therefore, O our brethren of the house of Israel, who are scattered to the extremities of the earth, it is your duty to strengthen each other, the great the small, the few the many, and to raise your voice in a faithfulness which shall never fail, and which shall make known publicly that God is a Unity, unlike all other unities; that Moses is His prophet,

who spoke with Him; that he is the Master of all the prophets and the most perfect of all of them; that the Law from the first word to the last was spoken by the Creator to Moses; that nothing was to be abrogated in it, nothing to be changed, nothing to be added thereto nor taken therefrom, and that no other Law than his will ever come from the Creator." A modern theologian cannot but envy the simplicity of this argument, and sigh at the modern inapplicability of so easy a refutation of men's doubts. But we shall after all see that though our hero ascribed to Moses all the words of the Law, the interpretation of those words was made to suit the metaphysics of our Moses of the twelfth century.

The "Letter to the South" was not a masterpiece of reasoning or exegesis, yet it won a victory. It was sent to Jacob Alfayyumi with the request that it be circulated widely, and read publicly in all

the congregations of Yemen, before the wise and the ignorant, before women and children. But the writer counselled caution, fearing further disturbances, should copies fall into wrong hands. There were in Islamic lands, as in Christian, converts from Judaism who not only sought to prove the truth of their new faith from the sacred Scriptures of their old religion, but kept a watchful eye on their former brethren, and stood ready to act as denunciators. Maimonides was conscious, too, that he was running serious risk by his intervention, but he did not allow such selfish apprehension to deter him. His intervention was completely successful. The Yemenite Jews were roused to enthusiasm, saner and more enduring than that produced by the local "Messiah." The latter had a genuine faith in himself, and solemnly challenged the king to decapitate him, asserting that he would still live. "The experiment was tried, but in this

case faith produced no miracle." Maimonides did not restrict his service to words. He turned his growing influence at Cairo to account, and when in 1174 Saladin's brother assumed the reins of government in Yemen, the material condition of the Jews followed their spiritual condition on the road to better things. In the daily Glorification Prayer (*Kaddish*) the grateful Yemenites included a complimentary allusion to Maimonides,[87] thus showing him an honour usually reserved for the Prince of the Captivity in Bagdad on the day of his accession to office.

One of the curiosities of the middle ages is the rapidity with which news spread. The fame of Maimonides was soon in every mouth. Chief of the methods by which influence radiated was correspondence. The "Letter to the South" was an epistle in reply to a direct communication. Every Rabbi was the recipient of a huge correspondence, which

mostly assumed the shape of questions on theoretical and practical religion. Maimonides boasts that he never failed to reply to any letter, except when he was too ill to write.[38] He moreover tells us that he always answered with his own hand, and declined the use of a secretary, lest he be suspected of arrogance. This statement chimes in well with the recent discoveries in the Cairo *Geniza*, for many "Questions" addressed to him have been found with his autograph answer attached. His replies are as clear as they are terse. We perceive in them the author's invariable qualities. When the point referred to him is halachic (a matter of practical law), he gives his decision without dialectics. When, however, the question gives opportunity to lay down general principles of law or theology, he freely avails himself of the chance. Many of his "Responsa" that have been preserved to us elsewhere as well as in the *Geniza* are full of inter-

est.[39] They belong in large part to a later period of his life, when Saladin had left Egypt (which he did in 1174), and Maimonides was private physician to the Vizir Alfadhel. By 1177 Maimonides appears to have been recognised as the official head of the Cairo Jews. He established an ecclesiastical board with nine colleagues, and set himself to such diverse ends as to bring decorum into public worship and to eliminate Karaism without severity towards Karaites. From one of his "Responsa" we gather the interesting information that the education of girls was not neglected in Fostat.[40] In another he replies to an aged correspondent who styles himself ignorant, and laments his inability to read the Hebrew works of Maimonides. "Call not thyself ignorant, but my pupil and my friend, both thou and all who seek to cleave to the study of the Law. Abase not thyself, and do not despair of the attainment of

perfection." " Maimonides' sympathy with human nature is revealed in these replies to an extent for which his formal treatises hardly prepare us. So with his humour and good sense. He was asked about a tallith (or scarf used at prayer) on which the worshipper had embroidered texts, to the disapproval of the local Rabbi. To the worshipper he said: " As thou servedst God in making it, so serve God in discarding it, and prevent dispute;" while to the precisionist Rabbi he added: " A Rabbi should rule with a gentle hand, nor should he interfere where interference is unnecessary."

In another response he again urges harmony: " We hear too much of unions in Israel; let us hear more of union." He indignantly repudiated the suggestion that the ritual law should be made more stringent in the case of the ignorant, lest they " break down the fence." " Shall we establish a safeguard for a safeguard,"

he sarcastically asked. "It is enough to rely on the traditional safeguards without troubling the community with further restrictions." When he had before him the case of an *aguna* (or wife whose husband had left her, and was probably dead), he said: "Our general principle must be to accept the *aguna's* testimony (as to her husband's death) without undue scrupulosity, for the judge that cross-examines her too rigidly does ill." The *aguna* needed all the Rabbi's sympathy in the middle ages. Again, the curious system of feeing "ten men of leisure" for the purpose of forming a "congregation" called from him the striking statement: "The intention of this institution (alluded to in the Jerusalem Talmud) was that there should be in every place ten men appointed to serve the public weal, and that should any communal or religious affair need their attention, they should leave their work and betake them-

selves to the synagogue. Therefore they said, 'Men at leisure *from their work*,' and they did not say, 'Idlers *without work*'; and in the Talmud reference was made to the attendance of these ten *at synagogue*, because the synagogue was the meeting-place for all engaged in philanthropy or in meeting sudden crises." [42]

"A physician," he says in his *Siraj*, "should begin with simple treatment, trying to cure by diet before he administers drugs." In his "Responsa" he applies this principle to spiritual ills. He is sometimes soothing, sometimes severe and vehement. He applied the gentle as well as the severe cure to the Karaites, and his success (as has been mentioned above) lay not so much in humiliating them as in re-attaching them to Rabbinism. "He made of Israel again one people, and brought one to the other, so that they became one flesh," said a French eulogist of him. Nachmanides also attri-

butes to Maimonides many such conversions, and the author of that remarkable book of travels, *Eben-Sappir* ("Sapphire-Stone"), informs us that the practical extinction of the Karaites in Arabic-speaking lands is due to the influence of Maimuni (to call Maimonides by another of his usual titles).[43] Reference has already been made to the attitude of Maimonides towards the Karaites. He tolerated no weakening of the Rabbinical laws of *tahara* (ritual purity), and in 1177 publicly denounced in Synagogue Karaite neglect in this respect. Women who followed the Karaite licence were deprived of their rights under the Kethuba (marriage contract).[44] But Maimonides did not allow this opposition to destroy his kindly feeling towards Karaites or others who differed from him in religious matters. He informed one of his correspondents that it was quite lawful to teach Christians the Law; and to a convert to Judaism

from Islam he wrote: "The Moslems are in no sense idolaters; such a thing has long been cut off from their lips and their heart; they maintain, as is fitting, the Unity of God." He even refused to call superstitions the stone-throwing at Mecca and the prostrations at prayer. "These things," he said, "have a pagan and superstitious origin, but they must not now be called superstitions, for their origin no longer dominates the meaning attached to these ceremonies." This is clearly the only safe view to take of ceremonial. Its religious worth depends almost as much on the spiritual significance attached to it as on its historical origin.

Perhaps Maimuni's most remarkable utterance is contained in that same "Responsum," in which he castigated a foolish Jewish scholar who had pained a convert from Islam by a reference to his origin. "When thy teacher called thee a fool for denying that Moslems are idol-

aters, he sinned grievously, and it is fitting that he ask thy pardon, though he be thy master. Then let him fast and weep and pray; perhaps he will find forgiveness. Was he intoxicated that he forgot the thirty-three passages in which the Law admonishes concerning 'strangers'? Thus, even if he had been in the right and thou in error, it was his duty to be gentle; how much more, when thou hadst the truth and he erred! And when he was seeking whether a Moslem is an idolater, he should have been cautious how he angered himself against a proselyte of righteousness and put him to shame, for our sages have said, 'He who gives way to his anger shall be esteemed in thine eyes as an idolater.' And how great is the duty which the Law imposes on us with regard to proselytes! Our parents we are commanded to honour and fear; to the prophets we are ordered to hearken. A man may honour and fear and obey without

loving. But in the case of 'strangers' we are bidden to love with the whole force of our heart's affection. And he called thee fool! Astounding! A man who left father and mother, forsook his birthplace, his country, and its power, and attached himself to this lowly, despised, and enslaved race; who recognised the truth and righteousness of this people's Law, and cast the things of this world from his heart—shall such a one be called fool? God forbid! Not witless but wise has God called thy name, thou disciple of our father Abraham, who also left his father and his kindred and inclined Godwards. And He who blessed Abraham will bless thee, and will make thee worthy to behold all the consolations destined for Israel; and in all the good that God shall do unto us He will do good unto thee, for the Lord hath promised good unto Israel."

CHAPTER VII

THE "MISHNEH-TORAH," OR RELIGIOUS CODE

1180

THE most brilliant period in the Moslem rule over Egypt coincides with the twenty-four years of Saladin's domination (1169-1193).[45] But the glory came from without. Like his great rival, Richard I of England, Saladin spent but a small portion of his reign in his capital. He passed but eight years in Cairo; the other sixteen were occupied in campaigns in Syria, Mesopotamia, and Palestine. It was, however, no detriment to Egypt that Saladin's policy was defensive and consolidating by the Nile, and aggressive only in Palestine. Cairo advanced far in spirit and intellect, while war was incessant in the other lands over which Saladin

claimed and exercised authority. While Maimonides was making Fostat the new centre of Judaism, Islam under Saladin also established its headquarters in the old capital of the Fatimids.

Saladin fortified Cairo with a citadel, but like the Rabbinical sage of old, he recognised that the real guardians of a city are not its soldiers but its scholars. The introduction into Cairo of the *Medresa*, or Collegiate Mosque, was the work of Saladin. The *Medresa*, with its regular courses of instruction, its comprehensive range of studies, its free popular lectures, was an innovation from Persia. Nureddin had imported the institution into Syria, Saladin carried it into Cairo and Alexandria. The Fatimid "Hall of Science" had to some extent forestalled the *Medresa*, but the Fatimids had devoted their energies solely to the mysticism of the Shia and to its speculative philosophy. When Saladin captured the treasures of

the Fatimids, he handed over the noble library of 120,000 manuscripts to the Khadi Alfadhel. On his accession to power Saladin not only retained the services of Alfadhel (who had been employed in the secretariat of the Fatimid khalif), but made him Vizir, and it says much for the characters of both, that Alfadhel retained his influence throughout Saladin's reign. Maimonides became one of the Vizir's physicians in or about 1185, and during the last thirty years of Maimonides' life, Alfadhel the Vizir was practically ruler of Egypt. Alfadhel was worthy of his master, who trusted him implicitly. Like many of the statesmen of his day, Alfadhel was not a Turk or a Persian, but a pure Lakmi Arab, born in Ascalon. Notable among the notabilities at Saladin's court, Alfadhel was "sovereign of the pen," who "threaded discourse with pearls of style." His devotion to culture, and especially to the promotion of it

in Cairo, his practical affection for the *Medresa*[46]—he founded one himself—make him of great importance to the career of Maimonides, who received honours and encouragement from the Vizir. Alfadhel, it is true, was often absent in body from Cairo, but never in spirit. "Bear me a message to the Nile," he wrote when engaged in a campaign in Mesopotamia, "tell it that Euphrates can never quench my thirst."

While Saladin was occupied in the conquest of Syria, and was leading up to the capture of Aleppo, Maimonides was winning possession of a citadel, mastery over which conferred a diadem more enduring and more honourable than any that rested on Saladin's noble brow. By the might of his genius, Maimonides assailed with friendly hands the fastness wherein lay enshrined the whole Jewish lore. His victory is chronicled in the second part of his great trilogy, in the *Mishneh-*

Torah ("Deuteronomy"), or *Yad Hachazaka* ("Strong Hand"). This gigantic work, a complete codification and digest of Biblical and Rabbinical law and religion, occupied him for ten years,[47] but when he completed it in November 1180, the magnitude of the performance, with its fourteen books and one thousand chapters, bore no relation to the time which he had devoted to it. According to an old tradition, the Mosaic enactments numbered 613 (365 negative and 248 positive commands). The Palestinian Rabbi Simlai, of the third century, was the first to make this statement explicit. In the eighth century, Simon Kahira (author of the *Halachoth Gedoloth*) tabulated the 613 laws, and his list held the field until the epoch of Maimonides. The writers of the *Azharoth*, or didactic hymns for recital at Pentecost, all adopted Simon Kahira's enumeration. The very popularity of this earlier list made it more necessary for

Maimonides to prepare one of his own. To anticipate criticism of his exclusions and inclusions, as well as to provide himself with a skeleton outline, he compiled his *Sefer Hamitzvoth* (Book of the Commandments), which though written in Arabic has been thrice translated, and is better known in its Hebrew form.[48] The list, afterwards prefixed by the author to the *Mishneh-Torah*, displays, technical as it is, the best qualities of Maimonides. The Existence of God, his Unity, the duty of loving Him, of fearing Him, of serving Him in prayer, of cleaving to Him, of swearing by His name, of imitating His attributes, of sanctifying His name: these are the first nine entries in Maimonides' list of affirmative precepts. He builds up the ritual laws on these as a basis. His grasp of general principles, his successful search for generalities underlying details, his power to bring to the front the spiritual side of Judaism, of showing

its expression in the ritual side, these characteristics in a catalogue of precepts reveal qualities which do not fall short of genius. To Maimonides the ceremonial law was as sacred and as divine as the ethical law; but the spiritual, doctrinal aspect not only came first, but justified and transfigured the rest.

In the *Mishneh-Torah* the same spirit prevails. His Code is not only a unique monument of industrious compilation from Bible, Talmud, and the whole Rabbinical literature. The claim of the Code to esteem rests on its manner as much as on its matter. Graetz, comparing the Talmud to a "Dædalian maze in which one can hardly find his way even with the thread of Ariadne," likens the *Mishneh-Torah* to a "well-contrived ground-plan, with wings, halls, apartments, chambers, through which a stranger might pass without a guide." There is some hyperbole in this description of the intricacies

of the Talmud, but there is no exaggeration in its eulogy of Maimonides. Judaism was in danger of losing itself in detail. The *Mishneh-Torah* omitted none of the details, whether significant or trivial; but on the one hand it systematised them, and on the other it brought them into relation with the fundamental postulates of Judaism. Maimonides is never weary of referring the student back to the starting point, to the nature and attributes of God, to man's duty to imitate his divine exemplar and to act always with the love of God consciously present as his sole motive and reward. The marvel of the book is that this golden thread of the spirit runs unbroken through all the ritual details with which the Code abounds, and thus in the *Mishneh-Torah* we have the completest justification of the Jewish conception of the relations between letter and spirit, for the letter does not and cannot kill, while the spirit gives it life. This

was the Talmudic spirit, and Maimonides in this respect, as in many others, is a true son of the tradition. In many respects, but not in all. For his very systematisation of the Talmud destroyed one of its best features. Maimonides wrote his " Code " in the first instance for " his own benefit, to save him in his advanced age the trouble and the necessity of consulting the Talmud on every occasion." [40] His plan, however, soon carried him beyond his own immediate needs, and he ended by compiling a complete digest, which in the language of the Mishnah and *without discussion* should offer a clear-cut decision of every question touching the religious, ritual, moral, and social duties of Jews. Had he succeeded in winning for his Code unquestioned supremacy in Israel, tradition instead of retaining its vitality must have become petrified, rigid unto death. As it is, the effect of Maimonides' Code, and of the later Code (*Shulchan Aruch*)

modelled on it, has not been altogether beneficial from this point of view. Hitherto, in all legal works, opinions had been stated in the name of the original authorities, decisions had been weighed in the balance. Maimonides certainly discriminated in theory between dicta meant literally and figuratively, final decisions and individual views; between "traditions" and "deductions"; between Rabbinical and Biblical laws intended for all time and those restricted to a particular occasion or locality. But in practice he did not allow these distinctions their due weight. Maimonides simply formed his own opinion (mostly on the basis of sound authority, it is true), and dogmatically announced it without reference to the nature of his authority. Not only did he render himself specially liable to attack when he fell into error, but there can be no doubt that Rabbi Abraham ben David of Posquières, in his over-virulent

criticism (*hassagoth*) on the Code, placed his finger on a real and fundamental fault when he stoutly objected to the dogmatism of the author.[50]

But Maimonides was bound to incur the censure. His fault was the correlative of his merits. To have reproduced the Talmudic *pilpul* (dialectics) would have been to defeat his main object. " If," he said, " I could summarise the Talmud into one chapter, I would not use two for the purpose." He feared, too, that devotion to Talmudic dialectics left no place and no leisure for the pursuit of those other studies which he held of equal importance. He wrote, moreover, for laymen as well as for experts, and simplicity and system were the first requisites. Alone of his three great works, the Code is written not in Arabic but in Hebrew. He chose a simple, lucid Hebrew akin to the Mishnaic dialect; not the " prophetic style," for that would not harmonise with

his subject, and not the philosophical manner, for that would be unintelligible to the "general reader." He even refused to translate the *Mishneh-Torah* into Arabic.[51] He did not employ the Aramaic idiom of the Talmud because of its difficulty. It is too much to assert, as some of his opponents asserted, that he desired the supersession of the Talmud; but he certainly did expect, though vainly, as the sequel proved, that his compilation would be accepted as the quintessence of the Talmud, self-sufficient and thus independent of its source.

Whether or not he was attempting the impossible or the undesirable when he proposed to place the Law, defined and dogmatic, in the hands of all his brethren, his conception of law was a great one. He thought not only of the law of conduct. Conduct was the spreading crown of branches; but reason, faith, spirituality were the roots of the tree. The truth

won by Greece through philosophy was also a truth belonging to Judaism. The principles of faith and love were the founts from which it drew its life. The Scriptural precepts were not arbitrary laws, but "judgments of righteousness flowing from a deep Well of Wisdom." "Is it just," he asked, "to treat only of the branches and to neglect the roots of the tree;" to explore the river and neglect its springs? Thus the opening section of the Code is the famous *Sefer Hamada'* ("Book of Religious Philosophy"), famous intrinsically and for the fierce controversies to which it gave rise. His Code begins with these words: "The foundation of foundations and the pillar of all Wisdom is the recognition that an original Being exists, who called all creatures into existence; for the recognition of this thing is a positive command, and is the great principle on which all things hang." This strikes the keynote, and nobly the

Mishneh-Torah proceeds on its way, codifying the "philosophical, the ethical, and ceremonial sides, and also the emotional side of Judaism as expressed in its Messianic ideals," until it culminates in its inspired close, speaking of the time when "the earth will be filled with the knowledge of God as the waters cover the sea."[32]

In a celebrated passage of the Code, at the end of the Hilchoth Melachim, he writes thus of the mission of Christianity and Islam: "The teachings of him of Nazareth (Jesus) and of the man of Ishmael (Mohammed), who arose after him, help to bring to perfection all mankind, so that they may serve God with one consent. For in that the whole world is full of the words of the Messiah, of the words of Holy Writ and the Commandments—these words have spread to the ends of the earth, even if many deny the binding character of them at the present day. And when the Messiah comes, all will return from their errors."

It is hard to say where Maimonides is at his best in the *Mishneh-Torah:* as a careful collator, "bringing together," to use his own words, "things far off, scattered among the hills"; as a legal specialist, clearly formulating a technical decision on a marriage law; as an astronomer compiling an original treatise on the Calendar; as an historian, prefixing to the "Laws concerning Idolatry" a rapid yet masterly sketch of the origin and development of nature-worship and pagan religion, and protesting against allowing any taint of superstition to stain Judaism; as the moralist, writing of ethical theory and the Law of the Mean, establishing principles of charity of man to man, of Israelite to those outside the pale; as the intense believer, urging the love of God with mystic thirst, speaking of Atonement with a combination of the divinest yearnings and consummate good sense; as the theologian, denying to miracle its claim as a test of divine truth, asserting

man's free will; as the metaphysician, peering behind the veil of first things. Part by part the work was issued as it was completed, and little wonder that those who obtained a portion longed for the whole. There was no vanity in the titles that he chose for it, *Mishneh-Torah* and *Mighty Hand*, derived from the opening and the close of the fifth book of Moses. It was a repetition, or rather a renewal of the law that Moses Maimonides presented to his people. The sage of Cairo, the second Moses, whom the Lord knew face to face, had performed again in the same land by the Nile "the signs and the wonders which the Lord sent him to do in the land of Egypt." He had once more revealed the "mighty hand" with whose aid the first Moses had "wrought in the sight of all Israel." Verily, as the contemporaries of Maimonides said of him, "From Moses unto Moses, there arose none like Moses."

CHAPTER VIII

Friends and Foes

The fame of the "Code" spread rapidly throughout the Jewish world. Soon hundreds of professional scribes were industriously copying the work, to meet urgent demands from every land in which Jews resided, from Spain to India, from the sources of the Euphrates and the Tigris to Yemen, from Provence to England. Ardent enthusiasts made their copies with their own hands. If the admirers of Maimonides hoped that his *Mishneh-Torah* would be canonised as an infallible guide, the event almost realised their dream. Specialists appreciated the performance on its legal and technical sides, and ordinary readers recognised with amazed delight that the sealed book of the Law had been opened to them at the touch of

this mighty magician. "Bring near the Ephod," men said, when in their difficulties they made appeal, never in vain, to the Code of Maimonides.[58] The interest taken in this and other works of the Cairo Rabbi by Christians and Moslems will be discussed in a later chapter. As to his Jewish contemporaries, the poets among them exalted him in their songs, and incense was burned everywhere at his shrines. As many thought and said, none had done such service to the Law since the days of Rabbi Judah the Prince, compiler of the Mishnah.

It was not till after the death of Maimonides that the opposition to him assumed serious proportions. Some premonitory notes of the coming strife were sounded during his lifetime, but the "Holy War" in Judaism did not break out into fierce activity until the cause of it lay in his honoured grave. Moreover, the struggle turned rather on the author's

third important work than on his second, though the first section of the *Mishneh-Torah* shared with the *Moreh* ("Guide of the Perplexed") the distinction of setting Judaism aflame.

The real friends of Maimonides were those who seemed his foes. Had his infallibility been accepted as a dogma, Judaism must have sunk into a papacy governed by a dead pope. The later form that the opposition took was due to antipathy to his philosophy; but the earliest burst of disapproval was based on the feeling that Maimonides must not be suffered to become the autocrat of Jewish life. The author himself frankly admitted that his critics were sometimes right. Questions reached him from various sides. Often the doubts thrown on his accuracy were due to the sceptic's ignorance, or to the employment of other readings in the same texts. Sometimes, however, the error really lay with Maimonides; in such

cases he readily admitted his oversight, thanked his correspondents, and implored them to continue their minute examination of his work. "I had no other thought than to clear the way." No claim of infallibility emanates from *him*. "It is proper to examine my words closely and to inquire into my statements." This type of criticism was thus welcomed by the author, and his rejoinders were gentle and conciliatory. But others of his critics were influenced by different motives. Some were animated by jealousy of the author. Some again feared that his simple, systematic reproduction of the Talmud would militate against the study of the Talmud in the original. This objection was not altogether unfounded, for in Yemen, where the Code of Maimonides received a peculiarly cordial welcome, the Talmud itself was thereafter almost completely neglected. In the Orient the "Code" again interfered seriously

with "vested interests." Under Islam, the Jews in many places were self-governing; not only under their *Resh Galutha* in Persia, their *Nasi* in Palestine, their *Nagid* in Egypt, but under less distinguished auspices in other parts of the Moslem world. In such communities the Talmud was chiefly used for practical law,[55] and the Code of Maimonides not only placed the layman at the same point of vantage as the Talmudist, but made the road to practical law so easy that the old lawyers were in danger of becoming superfluous. In Christian countries the Code was accepted in a more friendly spirit by the specialists of the old type. These did not regard Maimonides as their final court of appeal, but they cheerfully saw in him a new guide to set beside the old, a fresh aid to the study of the old lore with which their life was wrapped up. The chief exception to the latter class was R. Abraham ben David of Posquières. Of

his opposition something has been already said. He was a wealthy man who had founded a college in his city, but his influence was due to his profound scholarship. He determined, in no spirit of personal hostility to Maimonides, to examine closely into every statement of the Code, and his notes (*hassagoth*) are now usually printed in editions of Maimonides' Code, together with the counter-comments of R. Joseph Karo. The object of the Rabad —as R. Abraham ben David is called, from the initials of his name—was to demonstrate that in many cases it was necessary to go behind Maimonides to his sources.[56] It is regrettable that the Rabad indulged in very violent and disrespectful language, but Maimonides himself was not free from this medieval habit of abusing men who happened to hold opinions differing from his own. Unfortunately the comments of the Rabad did not reach Maimonides, but after the death of the

latter his accuracy was on the whole fully vindicated against his fiery opponent. Many of their differences arose from the fact that they had before them texts with various readings. Thus around the very Code itself there grew up a vast mass of that dialectical discussion from which the Code, in the author's intention, was to rescue Jewish law.

High on his official chair, mimicking the royal state of the Khaliphate, Samuel ben Ali of Bagdad took an ignoble part in the opposition.[57] "Surrounded by his slaves armed with scourges, he would not acknowledge any one equal, much less superior to himself" (Graetz). By the claim that the College at Bagdad was the sole seat of Jewish authority, Samuel and his allies were attempting to crush the actualities of the present under the memories of the past. Secret slander was added to more honourable weapons of warfare. Yet the Gaonate had grounds

enough for its dislike of Maimonides. Not only was he a formidable rival near the throne, but he had always set his face against the Persian luxury, and the revenues of the Bagdad College were to him anathema. Thus Maimonides at once endangered the official supremacy and challenged the moral integrity of the Gaonate. The Gaonate retaliated by depreciating the *Mishneh-Torah*, and charging its author with inaccuracy and heresy. This opposition was no doubt fortified by a sense, instinctive rather than conscious in many, that Maimonides' conception of Talmudic Judaism was an innovation and a danger. That the hostility often assumed petty and malicious forms is no proof that the opposition was at bottom trivial or insincere. One may smile, as Maimonides himself did, at such critics as, nervous of their own repute, refused to cast their eye over the "Code" lest they be suspected of learning from it.

Maimonides acted under all this provocation with manly self-restraint. Even when Phineas ben Meshullam of Alexandria publicly preached against the book, Maimonides did not betray more than a momentary irritation. His letters breathe a spirit of large-mindedness and even aloofness, for though he was not cold like the proverbial philosopher, he was indifferent where smaller men would have been roused to indignation. "Honour bids me," he said, "avoid fools, not vanquish them. Better is it for me to spend my efforts in teaching those fitted and willing to learn than waste myself in winning a victory over the unfit."[58] To add to his causes of anxiety, he fell ill soon after the *Mishneh-Torah* was completed. But neither the loud volume of general praise nor the slighter note of individual depreciation had power to move Maimonides. His joy and his consolation came from another source. One of

the most delightful incidents in his whole life synchronised with this critical moment.

Among the *anusim*, or forced converts to Islam, in the Maghreb, was the lad Joseph Aknin. He had remained true to Judaism despite his superficial conformity to the dominant religion, and over and above his scientific and medical studies he had drunk deep at the well of the literature of Israel. On the one side an Arab of the Arabs, he wrote poems in the language of the Koran; on the other a Jew of the Jews, he delighted in the Law all day. Joseph was about thirty years old when the fame of Maimonides reached him, and he hastened to leave his home and present himself before his master. On reaching Alexandria he wrote to Maimonides, explaining his ardent ambition to learn from the lips of the teacher whose books had already gained a hold over his spirit. Maimonides recognised in his cor-

respondent a kindred mind, and welcomed Aknin with a cordiality that soon ripened into love. "If I had none but thee in the world, my world would be full," said Maimonides. Master poured out his heart to pupil, and when Aknin was forced to leave Cairo for Aleppo, the bond of affection between "father" and "son" was so firmly tied, that their friendship endured unto death. It was for Aknin that Maimonides wrote his third great work, the "Guide of the Perplexed."[59]

Aknin, who appears to have been a persistent traveller, was soon placed in a position to display his enthusiastic regard for his master. Arrived at Bagdad,[60] he found that the persistent efforts of Samuel ben Ali had succeeded in raising clouds of suspicion against Maimonides. Some of the latter's disciples, noting the tendency of Maimonides to spiritualise the conception of a future life, hastily concluded that they were justified in

teaching, on his authority, that Judaism denied the doctrine of a bodily resurrection. When questioned on the point by his faithful friends in Yemen, Maimonides explained categorically that he did regard a belief in the resurrection as a corner-stone of Judaism. This did not suffice for some of his critics, who appealed to Samuel ben Ali for his opinion. Delighted at the compliment and at the opportunity of dealing his rival a blow, Samuel ben Ali proceeded to collect passages from the Agada and Midrash in which a bodily resurrection is taught, and insisted that all these utterances must be explained in their strictly literal sense. To add to the piquancy of his sting, the Bagdad Gaon quoted Moslem philosophers on the same side, gleefully claiming that Jewish tradition and Arab metaphysics were at one against the heresies of Maimonides. Joseph Aknin took up the gauntlet, and for the moment di-

verted the attacks of the Gaon to himself. At last, however, he could not endure the situation. He despatched a full report to his master, enclosed a copy of Samuel's treatise on the resurrection, and entreated Maimonides to reply to his assailants, and to retort on vice the abuse which they had heaped upon virtue. But Maimonides refused. His letter to Aknin betrays much pathos, and over his natural feeling of resentment his good-sense and magnanimity prevail. He tells Aknin that he had foreseen what had occurred. He appreciates his disciple's youthful, hot-headed anger, and attributes his own indifference to physical weakness and to the calm produced by age. But his sorrow is unbounded that his friend should suffer on his behalf, suffer in his own person, and also because his soul was distressed at his master's obloquy. "My heart is pained in your pain, but you will please me better by actively propagating to men

what is true than by setting yourself as my champion against the untrue. Teach, do not recriminate. Remember that you have injured this man, that his revenues are at stake. Shall such a man, being stricken, not cry? He concerns himself with what the multitude holds highest. Leave him to his trivialities, but what does he know of the soul and of philosophy? Remember he is old and occupies a position of dignity, and you are young and owe his age and position respect. You ask me as to your plan of opening a school in Bagdad in which you will teach the Law with my Code as the text-book. I have already sanctioned your proposal. Yet I fear two things. You will be constantly embroiled with these men. Or, if you assume the duty of teaching, you will neglect your own business affairs. I counsel you to take nothing from them. Better in my eyes is a single dirhem gained by you as a weaver, a tailor, or a carpenter, than a whole rev-

enue enjoyed under the auspices of the Head of the Captivity."

Later on Maimonides himself was drawn into a controversy with Samuel over a point of law. "Custom," said Maimonides in reply to a correspondent from Bagdad, "is of weighty import. Yet the *custom* must not be confused with *law*. Error must never be allowed to persist. There is no distinction in this matter between prohibiting what is in truth lawful, or allowing what is in truth forbidden. Neither policy should be tolerated." This is a characteristic reply, for Maimonides, *à propos* of an insignificant question regarding the passage of rivers on Sabbath, lays down a general principle on the relation between custom and law. In the controversy that ensued with Samuel, Maimonides emerged triumphant, yet his respectful tone and humble manner failed to soften the Gaon's ill-will.

At this time Maimonides frequently refers to himself as an old and ailing man.

Yet he was only fifty-one years of age, and had before him eighteen years of activity and happiness. He soon recovered from his despondency. In this very year his first and only son (Abraham) was born to him. Maimonides had probably married in his youth, but his wife must have died early.[61] In Egypt he married the sister of Abn-Almâli, one of the royal secretaries. The latter wedded the sister of Maimonides, so that the two men were doubly related. It may well be that much of our hero's despondency was due to the fact that he was long childless. Now, however, his son Abraham, and Aknin, his son in the spirit, cheered the prospect. We know little of his home-life, but what we do know suffices to prove that as a husband and father Maimonides was at once blessed and a blessing. He educated his son himself, cultivating his mind and soul; nor did he withhold from his own hearth that which he gave to the world.

CHAPTER IX

The Holy War
1187-1192

"The news of the fall of Jerusalem," writes Mr. Archer, "reached Europe about the end of October 1187. It is hard at this distance of time to realise the measure of the disaster in the eyes of the Western world. It was not merely that the Holy City had fallen; that all the scenes of that Bible history, which constituted emphatically the literature of medieval Christendom, had passed into the hand of the infidel. It was all this and something more; the little kingdom of Jerusalem was the one outpost of the Latin Church and Latin culture in the East; it was the creation of those heroes of the first Crusade whose exploits had already become the theme of more than

one romance; it lay on the verge of that mysterious East with all its wealth of gold and precious stones and merchandise, towards which the sword of the twelfth-century knight turned as instinctively as the prow of the English or Spanish adventurer four centuries later turned towards the West. . . . Thus Palestine inspired alike the imagination, the enterprise, and faith of Western Christendom."[62]

The response which Europe made to Saladin's challenge, the glories and horrors of the third Crusade, lie outside our present story. Egypt was scarcely affected by the struggle which for five years raged throughout the length and breadth of Palestine.[63] When Saladin vanquished the army of Guy of Lusignan at Hittin, near Tiberias, the conquest of Palestine and the capture of Jerusalem followed within a few months. Saladin, however, committed the fatal mistake of leaving

Tyre in his enemies' hands, and this fortress by the sea became the rallying point of the Franks. From Tyre marched, in 1189, the army which began the famous siege of Acre. Two days later Saladin besieged the besiegers, but after two years of heroism on both sides, the city surrendered to the Crusaders within five weeks of the arrival of Richard I of England. At Arsuf Richard inflicted a serious defeat on Saladin, but neither the brilliant personal feats nor the military genius of the Lion-hearted King could counterbalance the dissensions which prevailed in the Christian camp. The noblest feature of the third Crusade was the chivalrous courtesy which marked the relations between Saladin and Richard, though the two men never met at a personal interview. In the end, Saladin's power was unshaken. The whole of Palestine, except a narrow strip of the coast from Jaffa to Tyre, remained in Saracen

hands. It is remarkable with what fidelity Saladin was supported throughout the Holy War by every portion of his vast empire from Egypt to the Tigris. "Kurds, Turkmans, Syrians, Arabs, and Egyptians mingled in his armies, and all were Moslems and his servants when he called upon them for an effort. Not a province had fallen away, only one youthful vassal rebelled for an instant, though trials and sufferings of the long campaigns had severely taxed the soldiers' endurance and faith in their leader." [64] Saladin had accomplished his ambition. He had re-united Islam. He had regained the Holy City, which, as he informed Richard on one occasion, was even more to the Moslem than to the Christian. "Jerusalem," replied Saladin to Richard's appeal, "is holy to us as well as to you, and more so, seeing it is the scene of our Prophet's journey, and the place where our people must assemble at the Last Day. Think

not that we shall go back therefrom, or that we can be compliant in this matter." [85] And there the matter has rested until our own day.

Egypt had served as a recruiting ground for the army during the five exhausting years of the Holy War. In all these campaigns, actual warfare was confined to the summer. Saladin's army did no go into winter quarters, but the various contingents were sent home to recover their vigour and to attend to their personal concerns. A Moslem is never content to remain away from home for long, and this policy of Saladin's helped to keep his army content and spirited. Egypt suffered less than might have been expected from the constant drain of men.[86] For many out of the levies returned for the winter, and in Egypt the winter was the period for the chief processes of agriculture. When the Crusaders came within sight of Jerusalem, though Richard him-

self averted his glance, a Council of War decided on relinquishing the scheme of attacking the Holy City in favour of a march upon Cairo. If this wearisome campaign of 250 miles over the desert had been accomplished, the story of Egypt might have been very different. But as things turned out, the third Crusade left Cairo as it found it, secure and faithful to the Moslem cause.

Saladin's brother, el-Adil, with the co-operation of the Khadi Alfadhel, of whom we have already spoken, administered the affairs of Egypt during and after the war. El-Adil was the ablest and most "Western" member of Saladin's family; he was a skilful general, a resolute fighter, a shrewd diplomatist, and absolutely loyal. Year by year he led the Egyptian contingent to the annual assemblage in Palestine. Not once did the temptation to seize Egypt for himself rest in his thought. His prowess and his personal fascination

made him a favourite with the impetuous and lovable Richard. Cœur de Lion even proposed a marriage between el-Adil and his own sister Joan. El-Adil was the intermediary between the two hosts in the negotiations for the treaty of Ramleh, which ended the war. During Maimonides' last years, el-Adil was the recognised Sultan of Egypt.

It may have been from el-Adil that Richard heard of the fame of Maimonides as a medical practitioner. The "King of the Franks in Ascalon" sought his services as his physician, but Maimonides declined the honour.[87] He was well content with his position under the Vizir Alfadhel, and if he was acquainted with the events which had occurred at Richard's coronation, he must have felt safer in Cairo than in London. Maimonides had made vast strides forward in medical proficiency and repute. As he wrote to Jonathan of Lunel: "Although from my boy-

hood the Torah (Law) was betrothed to me, and continues to hold my heart as the wife of my youth, in whose love I find a constant delight, strange women whom I first took into my house as her handmaids become her rivals, and absorb a portion of my time." Among these "strange women" medicine took a foremost position. Alfadhel placed the name of Maimonides on the list of royal physicians, bestowed an annual salary upon him, and loaded him with distinctions. Maimonides shows less originality than learning in his medical works; he relied on precedent, and was noted for his familiarity with the older authorities. His medical writings, all of which are composed in Arabic, are for the most part summaries or elaborations of Galen, "the Medical Oracle of the Middle Ages."[68] His medical aphorisms, in the judgment of Graetz, "contain nothing further than extracts and classifications of older theories." Yet

this does incomplete justice to our hero. Maimonides certainly used experience as well as precedent as his guide; he tested his remedies by actual experiment; he recognised how deeply physical conditions are affected by psychic causes, and maintained, with a strong touch of modernity, that the aim of the doctor is to prevent illness more than to cure it. It was in times of health that the patient might most effectively prepare to meet and conquer the assaults of disease. 'Abd-el-Latif, the famous Bagdad physician, who stayed in Cairo for ten years (1194-1204), asserted that his visit to Egypt was in part due to his anxiety to see three men there, among them Musa ben Maimon. "The poet and khadi, Alsaid ibn Sina Almulk," adds Graetz, "sang of Abu-Amram's (Maimonides') greatness as a doctor in ecstatic verse:—

Galen's art heals only the body,
But Abu-Amram's the body and soul.
He could heal with his wisdom the sickness of ignorance.
If the moon would submit to his art,
He would deliver her of her spots at the time of full moon,
Complete for her her periodic defects,
And at the time of her conjunction restore her from her waning." [69]

The fall of Jerusalem into Saladin's hands in 1187 reopened the Holy City to the Jews.[70] Saladin freely permitted Zion's eldest sons to settle there, and they blithely availed themselves of the opportunity. It was long before the Jewish population attained large dimensions, but the growth of the new Jerusalem dates from the resumption of Moslem supremacy. Maimonides had suffered in spirit when in 1165 he beheld the desolation of Jerusalem, and it may well be that to his influence with Saladin were due the privileges now conferred on his brethren. Saladin, the nobility of whose character has not been exaggerated by Lessing or

Scott, needed little persuasion. Just as he welcomed the desire of Christian priests to hold services in the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, so he held out his friendly hand to Jews who longed to worship at the sites sacred to their past. During the brief years of Saladin's personal rule, Jerusalem first justified the claim it still enjoys—the claim to the fulfilment of the Hebrew prophet's dream: "My house shall be called a house of prayer to all peoples."

The Vizir Alfadhel is said at this period to have saved Maimonides from a serious danger. Maimonides was now the official head of the Jewish community, "Nagid" (Prince) over the whole Egyptian Jewry. He used his position for public not for private gain. He accepted no salary for himself, but turned his influence to good account. Yemen, the much-enduring, felt a lighter yoke when Maimonides, at the head of Jewish affairs,

had the ear of the Vizir and the Vizir's master. But the very prominence of Maimonides' position exposed him to risks which he had little foreseen. That Samuel ben Ali of Bagdad should become embittered as his rival progressed is intelligible; but another danger now threatened. Among our hero's friends in Fez had been Abul-Arab ibn Moisha. When the latter came to Cairo from the Maghreb, he recognised in the head of the Jewish community the man whom he had taken in past years for a Moslem. The Vizir had no difficulty in acquitting Maimonides of the charge of apostasy now preferred against him. The whole story is too circumstantial to be lightly rejected as inaccurate.[n] Alfadhel's regard for Maimonides was quite strong enough to carry our hero through a fiercer storm. As we shall see, Maimonides was so trusted and admired at Alfadhel's court that he had to pay daily visits to it. En-

gaged in communal affairs, with a large practice as a doctor, Maimonides was nevertheless able to occupy himself with his theological studies. During these years, while the Holy War was raging, Maimonides was engaged on the third and last of his great works, the treatise which was to set the crown on his reputation.

CHAPTER X

"The Guide of the Perplexed"
1190

In all his previous works Maimonides had touched upon philosophical questions. He held that the Scriptures were not only a guide to conduct, but that they contained, enveloped in a more or less allegorical wrapping, the essence of all metaphysical truth. If the ordinary Jew had lost hold of this metaphysic, it was because "barbarians deprived us of our possessions, put an end to our science and literature, killed our wise men, and thus we have become ignorant" (*Guide*, II, c. xi.). Maimonides more than once makes this claim, and Jewish authors have not been the only ones to maintain that Greek Philosophy was a derivative from Hebraic inspiration.[72] Even Aristotle, the legend

goes, accompanied his pupil Alexander the Great to Jerusalem, and obtaining possession of the original works of King Solomon, utilised them in developing his own system. Though, however, Maimonides contended that philosophy was the heritage of Israel, he had, in his treatment of such subjects in his earlier books, never forgotten that to the generality even of learned readers the technique of metaphysics was strange. He now felt that he also owed a duty to a class of students other than "unlettered tyros," and in whom a "previous knowledge of logic and natural philosophy" might be presupposed (*Introd.*). "My theory aims at pointing out a straight way, at casting up a high-road. Ye who have gone astray in the field of the Holy Law, come hither and follow the path which I have prepared. The unclean and the fool shall not pass over it. It shall be called the Way of Holiness."[73]

That "Metaphysics cannot be made popular" is the subject of a whole chapter of the *Guide* (I. xxxiv.). Maimonides enumerates five reasons why it is undesirable "to instruct the multitude in pure metaphysics." The subject itself is difficult. "He who can swim may bring up pearls from the depth of the sea; he who cannot swim will be drowned." Again, though every man possesses perfection *in potentia*, it does not follow that every one can realise this potentiality. Thirdly, the preliminary studies (including geometry, astronomy, physics, and logic) are of long duration, and "man in his natural desire to reach the goal finds them frequently too wearisome. . . . He who approaches metaphysical problems without due preparation is like a man who starts on a journey and falls into a pit. He had better remain at home." But it is not intellectual preliminaries alone that are required. There are, fourthly, moral quali-

fications, which include a seasoned integrity, moderation, and humility. Such qualities are incompatible with the heat of youth. Hence a certain age is required before the study of metaphysics is advisable. Finally, most men are too occupied with the concerns of the world to acquire philosophical taste and aptitudes. "For these reasons it was proper that the study of metaphysics should have been exclusively cultivated by privileged persons, and not entrusted to the common people. Such studies are not for the beginner, and he should abstain from them, just as the little child must abstain from solid food and from carrying heavy weights."[74]

In Joseph Aknin Maimonides felt that he had a disciple worthy of receiving his fullest confidence. He tells Aknin in his Prefatory Epistle: "Your absence has prompted me to compose this treatise for you and for those who are like you, however few they may be." Even so, the

author hesitated very much before writing his *Guide* for "thinkers whose studies brought them into collision with religion," yet, he adds, "When I find the road narrow, and can see no other way of teaching a well-established truth except by pleasing one intelligent man and displeasing ten thousand fools, I prefer to address myself to the one man, and to take no notice whatever of the condemnation of the multitude." To Aknin, then, he sent the *Guide*, chapter by chapter, as he completed each in Arabic. The book was, as the author himself remarks, a supplement to his *viva voce* lessons to Aknin (ii. 24). The perplexities to which Maimonides directed himself were not those of sceptics, but of believers; men firm in their religious faith, yet bewildered "on account of the ambiguous and figurative expressions employed in the Scriptures." In a sense the problem before Maimonides was the same that faced the Christian

scholastics, that faces all men who cannot but serve the two masters, Reason and Faith. But the scholastics of the twelfth century took two lines equally far from that taken by Maimonides. Some of them deposed Reason from her throne, and made her the handmaid of Faith. Others simply substituted Athens for Rome, and set up Aristotle in place of the Pope. Maimonides trusted Reason completely, but he rendered no slavish worship to Aristotle. Spinoza accuses him of disingenuousness in asserting that he could always find in Scripture the truths which reason revealed; that, when his philosophy contradicted the plain utterance of the Bible, he would not therefore suspect the former, but would seek for a new interpretation of the latter.[76] No doubt Maimonides does confess that he was guided by this principle in his reconciliation of theology with metaphysics. "I do not reject the Eternity of the Universe," says Maimon-

ides (ii. 25), "*because* certain passages in Scripture confirm the creation; for such passages are not more numerous than those in which God is represented as a corporeal being; nor is it impossible or difficult to find for them a suitable interpretation." "Those passages in the Bible, which, in their literal sense, contain statements that can be refuted by proof, must and can be interpreted otherwise." But Maimonides simply perceived that certain passages in Scripture *must* either be allegorised or pronounced false; he preferred the former to the latter alternative. "Employ your reason," he says (ii. 47), "and you will be able to discern what is said allegorically, figuratively, and hyperbolically, and what is meant literally, exactly according to the original meaning of the words. You will then understand all prophecies, learn and retain rational principles of faith, pleasing in the eyes of God, who is most pleased with

truth, and most displeased with falsehood; your mind and heart will not be so perplexed as to believe or accept as law what is untrue or improbable, while *the Law is perfectly true when properly understood.*" (Very much of Maimonides' allegorising is, let it be noted, based on perfectly sound exegesis. "Every prophet has his own peculiar diction" (ii. 29) is a true generalisation.) But how comes it that the Scriptures need an esoteric explanation? Because the Word of God was designed for all men, for simple believers as well as for men whose faith was reinforced by philosophy. The Bible has its message for both. On the one hand, in Rabbinic phrase, "The Law speaks the language of man," and its object is to serve for the instruction "of the young, of women, and of the common people." But, on the other hand, "Faith consists in inmost conviction, not in mere utterances. . . . Faith is apprehension by the

soul" (i. 50). It is possible even for men "to declare the Unity with their lips, and assume plurality in their hearts," if their reason has not come to the aid of their faith by philosophically analysing the meaning of Unity. "Show me thy way that I may *know* thee, that I may find grace in thy sight" (Exod. xxxiii. 13), said Moses; and Maimonides comments thus: "We learn from these words that God is known by His attributes, for Moses believed that he knew Him, when he was shown the ways of God. The words, 'that I may know thee,' etc., imply that he who knows God will find grace in His eyes. Not only is he acceptable and welcome to God who fasts and prays, but every one who acquires a knowledge of Him" (i. 54). Maimonides believed, but with the mind as well as the heart. "In this manner," he concludes one of his characteristic allegorisations, "will those understand the dark sayings of the pro-

phets who desire to understand them, who awake from the sleep of forgetfulness, deliver themselves from the sea of ignorance, and raise themselves upward nearer to higher things. But those who prefer to swim in the waters of their ignorance, and to go down very low, need not exert the body or heart; they need only cease to move and they will go down by the law of nature" (ii. 10). If this was the scholastic attitude, it was the attitude of Erigena rather than of Abelard. Maimonides was not a reconciler of two distinct bodies of truths—he was a unifier. Reason and Faith taught one truth. And though we may now differ from Maimonides in our reading of the message delivered on the one hand by revelation, and on the other by reason, we have still to thank him for introducing into Judaism the spirit of fearless intellectual freedom wedded to severe moral discipline. It is sometimes amusing and even painful to observe the

desire of Maimonides to read his own thoughts into ancient books. "Consider," he remarks in one place (i. 70), "how these excellent and true ideas, comprehended only by the greatest philosophers, are found scattered in the Midrashim." Yet it was impossible for a man to go further in defiance of mere authority than he did, unless he was prepared like Spinoza to discard authority altogether.[78]

This favourable view of the attitude of Maimonides is confirmed by his relations to Aristotle. Strange as the statement may appear with reference to a schoolman and Aristotelian, no man was ever less a slave to prejudice and preconceptions than he essentially (though not consistently) was. In several passages his indignation breaks out against the men who dare to assert nothing for which they cannot quote chapter and verse. Observe, for instance, his relations to the Arabian Mutakallemim—the Philosophers of the

Kalam, or Word—with whom he held important points in common. He differed from them in rejecting the atomic theory, the impossibility of the existence of substance without accidents, the denial of the infinite, the untrustworthiness of the senses. Against all of these doctrines he protested vigorously and successfully. But when he agreed with the exponents of the *Kalam* as he did on the question of Creation (he, with them, holding the *Creatio ex nihilo* against Aristotle, who maintained the Eternity of the Universe), such agreement with the Mutakallemim does not moderate his onslaught upon their method, for it is their *method* rather than their *results* which he is determined to demolish. They made the existence of God dependent on Creation; and thus Aristotelians denying Creation would thereby overthrow the doctrine of the existence of God. Maimonides accordingly prefers to adopt for argument's sake the belief

in the eternity of the universe, and to prove on that basis the existence and unity of God; he then returns on his premise, and proves Creation. If the latter is admitted, the existence of God follows, for a Creation presupposes a Creator. It may well be that Maimonides was partly led to follow this course by a latent sense that his proofs of Creation were but imperfectly conclusive. But his opposition to the method of the Kalam must be given in his own words, for it will be clearly seen that the utterer of these remarks was no ordinary scholastic. His hostility to the Mutakallemim arose because "first of all they considered what must be the properties of things which should yield proof for or against a certain creed; and when this was found, they asserted that the thing must be endowed with these properties. . . . They found in ancient books strong proofs for the acceptance or rejection of certain opinions,

and thought there was no further need to discuss them" (i. 71). Maimonides did not accept the Ptolemaic astronomy as final or perfect (ii. 24). With regard to Aristotle, the revolt of Maimonides is even more remarkable. He differs from him on the Creation controversy, but more than that. He casts ridicule on those "who blindly follow" the Greek philosopher—who "consider it wrong to differ from Aristotle, or to think that he was ignorant or mistaken in anything" (ii. 15). It would be difficult to match this independence in other schoolmen of his age, and hence it is that despite the obsolete nature of many of the problems to which Maimonides directs himself in the *Guide*, his treatise breathes a modern spirit, or rather a spirit which responds to the intellectual necessities of all ages.

It would be unprofitable to offer a full analysis of the contents of the *Guide*. The spirit of the book is immortal, but much

of its actual content is obsolete. Thus one of the main objects of the work is to explain certain terms occurring in the Bible, to bring its anthropomorphic expressions into relation with the true theory of the nature of God. Mohammedan critics had energetically attacked Judaism on this ground, urging that its conception of God was degraded by the application of corporeal attributes to Him.[77] The true reply to this, that the Bible enshrines expressions dating from different strata of religious belief, and that the final message of the Hebrew Scriptures is to be found in its highest and purest ideas, not in its more primitive and popular phraseology, was impossible to Maimonides and his age, though it is remarkable how near Maimonides approached to the modern view in some points. Earlier Jewish philosophers and theologians had explained these corporeal expressions as figurative, but Maimonides is not sat-

isfied with this: he attempts to assign to each of them some definite metaphysical meaning. Thus the narrative of Adam's sin is interpreted as an allegorical exposition of the relations between Sensation, Intellect, and the Moral Faculty. Adam originally possessed in perfection the intellectual faculty by which he distinguished between the *true* and the *false* qualities inherent in the things themselves. His sin lowered this intellectual faculty, and his passions being no longer under its control, the moral idea of *good* and *evil* replaced the intellectual contrast of *true* and *false*; for morality restrains the desires and appetites, which only come into play when the supremacy of the intellect is weakened or overthrown. Adam, Eve, and the Serpent, represent the intellect, the body, and the imagination. Adam's three sons typify the three elements in man: the vegetable, the animal, and the intellectual. Abel and Cain perish, but

Seth (the intellect) survives and forms the basis of the human race (ii. 30, 31).

Maimonides proceeds to show, soundly enough, that ordinary men consider matter or body the only true and full existence; that which is neither itself a body nor a force resident in a body, is to such men non-existent and inconceivable. Again, life is commonly identified with motion, although motion is not a part of the essence but a mere accident of life. Perception, again, is the most conspicuous means of acquiring knowledge. Especially is this true of sight and hearing, while language is the only mode of communication between one mind and another. Hence, says Maimonides, the God of the Bible who "rides on *araboth*" (*i. e.* presides over the highest sphere of immaterial things), and is identical with the Primal Cause and Ever-active Intellect of the philosophers—this God is described in Scripture as acting, seeing, hearing,

and speaking, and even the organs by which those functions are performed in man are ascribed to Him; for in man those functions are perfections, and they are predicated of God because we wish to assert His perfection. Yet Attributes are, according to Maimonides, utterly inapplicable to God. We cannot even predicate His *essence*; we can only assert *that* He exists. No definition of God is possible *per genus et differentiam*, since these are the causes of the existence of anything so defined, and God is the final cause. Even Unity is inadmissible as an accident to God; God is One, but does not possess the attribute of Unity. To say in the usual meaning of the term that God is One, is to imply that His essence is susceptible of quantity; but, as metaphysics is forced to employ inadequate language, in order to assert that God *does not include a plurality*, we declare that He is One. Hence, since only *negative* attri-

butes are admissible, and since these are infinite in number, there is no possibility of obtaining a knowledge of the true essence of God. Yet, paradoxically enough, Maimonides holds that the greater the number of the negative attributes one can rationally assign, the nearer one has reached to a knowledge of God.[78]

This leads us to consider an important part of Maimonides' philosophy, viz., the meaning of communication between God and man. In passing at once to his theory of *prophecy*, we are omitting his proofs of the Existence of God. For the latter purpose, he enunciates (Part ii.) twenty-six propositions, which are an admirable summary of the Aristotelian metaphysics. He holds these propositions inadequate, and proceeds to adduce his own proofs for the existence of an "infinite, incorporeal, and uncompounded Primal Cause. The series of causes for every change is finite, and terminates in the Primal

Cause." This remains the most acceptable proof of the existence of God. Again, as regards *Creatio ex nihilo.* The Universe is a living, organic being, of which the earth is the centre. There are obvious points of contact between this view and modern scientific theory, a view which is as far from materialism on the one hand as from Pantheism on the other. Over and over again Maimonides, amid the most obsolete of medieval metaphysics, strikes an eternally vital chord. He continues to argue that all life and change in the Universe depend upon the revolutions of the Spheres, each of which has its Soul and Intellect (the Scriptural Angels are identical with the Intellects of the Spheres). This well accords with Aristotle, but Maimonides parts company with his master when the latter holds that these Spheres and Intellects co-exist with the Primal Cause. Faithful to the Scriptural view, Maimonides maintains that

the Spheres and their Intellects had a beginnning, and were brought into existence by the will of the Creator. He derives the doctrine of *Creatio ex nihilo* from this theory as to the creation of the spheres. "Admitting that the great variety of the things in the sublunary world can be traced to those immutable laws which regulate the influence of the spheres on the beings below, the variety in the spheres can only be explained as the result of God's free will." [79]

As to the divine communication with man (ii. 32 *seq.*), Maimonides agrees with the Platonic or general Greek view that *prophecy*, or attainment of direct knowledge of the truth, is a *natural* faculty of men which may be reached by all who submit to the necessary preparation, and who can raise themselves to the requisite intellectual and moral perfection. Maimonides endeavours to show that this is also the view of the Bible, but he is not

successful in the attempt, and most of his Jewish successors have severely attacked him on this point. He seeks to anticipate obvious objections by declaring that men duly qualified may be withheld from prophecy by the will of God. But in reply to this one must urge that according to Scripture the will of God is the regular and normal condition for acquiring the prophetic spirit. Prophecy, in the view of Maimonides, is an emanation through the Active Intellect to man's rational and imaginative faculty, *i. e.* the faculty of receiving sense-impressions, and retaining and combining images of them. The latter part of the faculty is most active in dreams, which differ from prophetic vision in degree and not in kind. The imagination (in the psychological meaning of the term) acquires such an efficiency in its action that it regards the image as if it came from without, and as if it were perceived through the bodily senses.

Granted that a man possesses a brain and body in perfect health, that his passions are pure and well balanced, that his thoughts are engaged in lofty matters, that his attention is directed to the knowledge of God—such a man must be a prophet. If he be of the highest order, his imagination will represent things not previously perceived by the senses, which his intellect will have been perfect enough to comprehend. Maimonides' view seems to come to this, that prophecy does not differ essentially from ordinary intellection: perception is *always* the result of a divine influence, and prophecy is that state of intellection in which the preliminary *sense*-perception is more or less dispensed with; in a word, when the divine influence, by acting immediately on the perfect intellect, is (psychologically speaking) represented by the perfect imagination, without the intermediation of the faulty and defective senses.

By this and other original conceptions, too technical to reproduce here, Maimonides introduced a fresh spirit into Jewish theology. God was realised in thought as in action; and the Law of God became at once a guide to conduct, and a rational bond between the human and the divine. In the third part of the *Guide* Maimonides insists again and again that the purpose of the Law is man's perfection. "The well-being of the soul is promoted by correct opinions. . . . the well-being of the body is established by a proper control of the relations of practical life." The Law aims at producing this "double perfection" of man. In his investigation of the origins of certain precepts of the Law, Maimonides adopts a modern standpoint: his importance in the scientific study of religion has not yet been fully realised. There are few parallels in the twelfth century to his interest in other forms of religion, his appreciation of the

value of primitive ideas in explaining the developed theology of Israel. He is less admirable in his attempt to derive the food laws of the Pentateuch from hygienic and medical principles, for his theory explains only a part of the facts. Whatever the primitive origin of the dietary code, it is, in the Pentateuch, a detail of the great law of "holiness," which includes within its range both spirit and body, and makes for that very "double perfection" of which Maimonides himself speaks in other connections. No part of the *Guide*, again, led to more controversy than his theory as to Sacrifices[80] (III. chs. xxxii. and xlvi.). Here Maimonides collects many facts as to sacrificial rites among other peoples, proves the general prevalence and affection for this method of worship, and argues that in the Pentateuch sacrifices were a concession rather than an ordinance. "It was in accordance with the wisdom and plan of God,

as displayed in the whole Creation, that He did not command us to discontinue all these manners of service; for to obey such a commandment would have been contrary to the nature of man, who generally cleaves to that to which he is used. It would in those days have made the same impression as a prophet would make at present if he called us to the service of God and told us in His name that we should not pray to Him, nor fast, nor seek His help in time of trouble; that we should serve Him in thought and not by any action" (III. xxxii.). This is the theory of Maimonides, the individual thinker. It is not inconsistency, still less dishonesty, that made Maimonides, as a codifier, include in his *Mishneh-Torah* the restoration of the Sacrifices among the tenets of traditional Judaism.

Apart, then, from any specific contributions to religious thought, the *Guide* is

a permanent influence in Judaism, an influence entirely for good. True, every age has its own perplexities, and needs its own Guide. But the spirit of Maimonides may help us now as it helped sympathetic souls in the twelfth century. The scholastic theory that spirit and mind are one, that God reveals Himself in nature, in man, and in His Word, that philosophy and faith lead equally to truth and to the same truth, that religion to be a force in life must satisfy its intellectual as well as its moral and emotional necessities, that he lives unto God who lives unto truth,—this great and abiding conception finds its culmination in the *Guide* of Maimonides. All further development in Judaism starts with and from the *Guide*. Its logic may no longer satisfy, its metaphysics no longer suffice, but its spirit must be with us if we would serve God as He would be served, if the *knowledge* of God is to fill the earth as the waters cover the

seas. "The highest kind of worship," says Maimonides as he approaches the end of his treatise, "is only possible when the knowledge of God has been acquired. . . . The fear of God is produced by the *practices* prescribed in the Law; the love of God is the result of the *truths* taught in the Law. . . . That perfection in which man can truly glory is attained by him when—as far as this is possible for man—he has acquired the knowledge of God, of His providence. . . .With this knowledge to help him he will determinedly seek loving-kindness, judgment, and righteousness, and thus *imitate the ways of God.* . . . May He grant us, and all Israel with us to attain that which He promised us: 'The eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped'; 'the people that walked in darkness have seen a great light; they that dwell in the land of the shadow of death, upon them hath the light shined'

(Isaiah xxxv. 5; ix. 2)." Then, as though to show that this light, far from being the privilege of the philosophical few, may after all enter into the heart of all men, Maimonides closes the *Guide* with these words:—

"God is near to all that call upon Him, if they call upon Him in truth, and turn to Him. He is found by every one who seeks Him, if he, the seeker, goes steadfastly towards Him, nor ever turns astray. AMEN."

CHAPTER XI

Last Years
1193-1204

With the completion of the *Guide* the life-work of Maimonides was ended. He was then only fifty-five, and had another fourteen years to live, but his health was broken, and his strength was absorbed by his professional work as Nagid of the Jewish community and as Physician of the Court. Cairo, moreover, passed through troublous times, and Maimonides must have been affected by the political anxieties of the government.[81] On the death of Saladin in 1193, dissension prevailed among the Sultan's family, despite the prudent counsels of Saladin's brother el-Adil ("Saphadin"). Saladin's son 'Aziz, who had succeeded to the Egyptian throne, died in 1198 from a fever caught

during a hunting expedition in the Fayyum, and el-Adil became master not only of Egypt but of the greater part of Saladin's empire. In 1201 the Nile was exceptionally low, and famine and pestilence ravaged Egypt. The account given of the consequent distress by the Bagdad physician, 'Abd-el-Latif (who, as has been mentioned before, was in Cairo from 1194-1204), is terrible in the extreme. He asserts that from end to end of Egypt the inhabitants habitually ate human flesh, and that the "very graves were ransacked for food."

But 'Abd-el-Latif is given to exaggeration. "As a whole," says Mr. Lane-Poole, "the period of Ayyubid rule in Egypt, in point of imperial power, internal prosperity, and resolute defence against invasion, stands pre-eminent in the history of the country."[82] El-Latif passes the bound again when he says that during this very period Maimonides, "a man of

very high merit," was "governed by an ambition to take the first place, and to make himself acceptable to men in power." Maimonides certainly did not lack ambition, and he does adopt, especially in the *Guide*, a "superior air" towards all but the philosophical clique. The suspicion of Efodi, that the contrast drawn at the end of the *Guide* between light and darkness refers to the period after and before the composition of the *Guide*, seems, however, unfounded. Maimonides' irritating assumption of confidence in his own views, his conviction that only those could differ from him who failed to understand him—these were as much literary fashions as is the conventional humility of modern writers. Even less just is el-Latif's charge that Maimonides aimed at the favour of the great. Admired by the great, Maimonides was worshipped by the masses, and he deserved the applause of the few and of the many. His time

was, as we shall see, at the disposal of the poor as well as of the rich, and if he became the favourite of rulers, he was none the less the idol of the ruled. But he never sought or won popular affection; he was too detached from the emotions of the many for the many to regard him with emotion. He was out of sympathy with the "play" side of human nature. Poetry, though he occasionally lapses into a flowery style in his own epistles, he held a childish waste of time,[83] music had no charms for him; eating and drinking and love were to him justifiable only in so far as necessary for maintaining the life of the individual or continuing the race. Ibn Gabirol might sing of the joys of wine, Abraham ibn Ezra might versify the praises of chess, Jehuda Halevi might turn his poetical genius to the idealisation of human love. The pleasures of the table were to Maimonides a degradation; to sing of love was to use a divine

gift in an act of rebellion against the giver. Maimonides, both in his *Guide* and in his medical precepts drawn up for the Vizir, directed himself against *excess* in all of these things, but he can have had no fondness for them even in moderation. Still, his view of life was not ascetic; it was purely intellectual. His God was a metaphysical entity who must be approached with morality and piety, but also with philosophical understanding. Few were the elect, in this view. But the virility, the sanity of the view is undeniable. Maimonides enthroned God in the most abiding of thrones, the human Reason. If God is firmly seated there, the heart is also moved towards and by the divine spirit; but a religion which *originates* in the emotions ends in sensuousness or mysticism. Religion is, after all, an emotion, but in a pure, spiritual monotheism such as Maimonides expounded, the fount of this emotion is in the reason, not in the senses.

At the moment when his *Guide* was finished, the opposition of the Gaon in Bagdad reached its severest phase.[84] It was thus that he found himself compelled to explain in a separate Epistle (*Techiyath Hamethim*, "The Resurrection of the Dead") his views on Resurrection. His pupil, Aknin, asked him to write on the subject.[85] He expressed his displeasure at being forced to repeat what he had previously written, and emphatically asserted that his spiritual view of immortality did not imply a denial of the return of the soul to the body. On the other hand, the opposition of Bagdad was more than balanced by the appreciation of Southern France. "Nowhere did Maimuni's ideas find a more fruitful ground," writes Graetz, "and nowhere were they adopted with more readiness than in the Jewish congregations of South France, where prosperity, the free form of government, and the agitation of the Albigenses

against austere clericalism, had awakened a taste for scientific investigation, and where Ibn Ezra, and the Tibbon and Kimchi families, had scattered seeds of Jewish culture. . . Not only laymen, but even profound Talmudists, like Jonathan Cohen of Lunel, idolised him, eagerly watched for every word of his, and paid him homage. 'Since the death of the last authority of the Talmud, there has never been such a man in Israel.'" The last years of Maimonides were sweetened by the correspondence which ensued between himself and the Provençal Jews. These regarded him as more than human, as the instrument divinely appointed for the revival and purification of Judaism. They consulted him in their doubts, and drew from him some very notable letters. In 1194 he detailed, in reply to questions from Marseilles, his views on astrology. His letter is remarkable for its era, and takes its place worthily by the side of

Ibn Ezra's protest against a belief in demons. "Know, my masters," writes Maimonides, "that no man should *believe* anything which is not attested by one of these three sanctions: rational proof, as in mathematical sciences; the perception of the senses; or tradition from the prophets and the righteous." Works on astrology were the product of fools, who mistook vanity for wisdom. Men were inclined to believe whatever was written in a book, especially if the book were ancient; and in olden times disaster befell Israel because men devoted themselves to such idolatry instead of practising the arts of martial defence and government. He had himself studied every extant astrological treatise, and had convinced himself that none deserved to be called scientific. Maimonides then proceeds to distinguish between astrology and astronomy, in the latter of which lies true and necessary wisdom. He ridicules the supposition

that the fate of man could be dependent on the constellations, and urges that such a theory robs life of purpose, and makes man a slave of destiny. "It is true," he concludes, "that you may find stray utterances in the Rabbinical literature which imply a belief in the potency of the stars at a man's nativity, but no one is justified in surrendering his own rational opinions because this or that sage erred, or because an allegorical remark is expressed literally. A man must never cast his own judgment behind him; the eyes are set in the front, not in the back."

Jonathan of Lunel has already been named among the ardent admirers of Maimonides. He now sent to Cairo a series of twenty-four questions on points arising out of the *Mishneh-Torah*. Some time elapsed before Maimonides could find leisure to reply, and he did so in a letter pathetic with its picture of weariness and weakness. The same note is struck in

the letter which he sent to Samuel ibn Tibbon, who was engaged in a Hebrew translation of the *Guide*. From Lunel had come the request that Maimonides would himself undertake the translation. He, however, was well satisfied as to Ibn Tibbon's qualifications, and referred them to the latter. In this epistle he exhorts the Provençal Jews to remain steadfast in their devotion at once to the Talmud and to its scientific study. The despondency of the writer is not more marked than is his confidence in the saving power of the few. "You, members of the congregation of Lunel, and of the neighbouring towns, stand alone in raising aloft the banner of Moses. You apply yourselves to the study of the Talmud, and also cherish wisdom. But in the East the Jews are dead to spiritual aims. In the whole of Syria none but a few in Aleppo occupy themselves with the Torah according to the truth, but even they have

it not much at heart. In Irak there are only two or three grapes (men of insight); in Yemen and the rest of Arabia they know little of the Talmud, and are merely acquainted with Agadic exposition. Only lately have they purchased copies of my Code, and distributed them among a few circles. The Jews of Judea know little of the Torah, much less of the Talmud. Those who live among the Turks and Tartars have the Bible only, and live according to it alone. In the Maghreb you know what is the position of the Jews. Thus it remains to you alone to be a strong support to our religion. Therefore be firm and of good courage, and be united in it." The letter to Samuel ibn Tibbon, written in September 1199, opens with a eulogy of Samuel's father, Judah.[86] "I did not know that he had left a son. . . . Blessed be He who has granted a recompense to your learned father, and granted him such a son; and indeed not to him

alone, but to all wise men. For in truth unto us all a child has been born, unto us all a son has been given. 'This offspring of the righteous is a tree of life,' a delight of our eyes, and pleasant to look upon. I have already tasted of his fruit, and, lo, it was sweet in my mouth even as honey." Maimonides proceeds to praise Ibn Tibbon's Hebrew style and his knowledge of Arabic, surprising as displayed by one born among the "stammerers." The Provençal Jews seem to have spoken and written Arabic faultily. Maimonides' praise of Ibn Tibbon's style is not generally shared by readers of his translations. But whether Ibn Tibbon fulfilled Maimonides' ideal or not, the Cairo sage formulates an excellent canon for his correspondent's guidance. "Let me premise one canon. Whoever wishes to translate, and purposes to render each word literally, and at the same time to adhere slavishly to the order of the words and sentences in

the original, will meet with much difficulty. This is not the right method. The translator should first try to grasp the sense of the subject thoroughly, and then state the theme with perfect clearness in the other language. This, however, cannot be done without changing the order of words, putting many words for one word, or *vice versa*, so that the subject be perfectly intelligible in the language into which he translates." Maimonides then enters *seriatim* into Ibn Tibbon's difficulties, and advises him as to his course of philosophical reading. But the most interesting passage is the one in which Maimonides describes his own manner of life:—

> Now God knows that in order to write this to you I have escaped to a secluded spot, where people would not think to find me, sometimes leaning for support against the wall, sometimes lying down on account of my excessive weakness, for I have grown old and feeble.
>
> But with respect to your wish to come here to me, I cannot but say how greatly your visit would

delight me, for I truly long to commune with you, and would anticipate our meeting with even greater joy than you. Yet I must advise you not to expose yourself to the perils of the voyage, for beyond seeing me, and my doing all I could to honour you, you would not derive any advantage from your visit. Do not expect to be able to confer with me on any scientific subject for even one hour either by day or by night, for the following is my daily occupation:—

I dwell at Misr (Fostat) and the Sultan resides at Kahira (Cairo); these two places are two Sabbath days' journey (about one mile and a half) distant from each other. My duties to the Sultan are very heavy. I am obliged to visit him every day, early in the morning; and when he or any of his children, or any of the inmates of his harem, are indisposed, I dare not quit Kahira, but must stay during the greater part of the day in the palace. It also frequently happens that one or two of the royal officers fall sick, and I must attend to their healing. Hence, as a rule, I repair to Kahira very early in the day, and even if nothing unusual happens, I do not return to Misr until the afternoon. Then I am almost dying with hunger. I find the ante-chambers filled with people, both Jews and Gentiles, nobles and common people, judges and bailiffs, friends and foes—a mixed multitude, who await the time of my return.

I dismount from my animal, wash my hands, go forth to my patients, and entreat them to bear with me while I partake of some slight refreshment, the only meal I take in the twenty-four hours. Then I attend to my patients, write prescriptions

and directions for their various ailments. Patients go in and out until nightfall, and sometimes even, I solemnly assure you, until two hours and more in the night. I converse with and prescribe for them while lying down from sheer fatigue, and when night falls I am so exhausted that I can scarcely speak.

In consequence of this, no Israelite can have any private interview with me except on the Sabbath. On that day the whole congregation, or at least the majority of the members, come to me after the morning service, when I instruct them as to their proceedings during the whole week; we study together a little until noon, when they depart. Some of them return, and read with me after the afternoon service until evening prayers. In this manner I spend that day. I have here related to you only a part of what you would see if you were to visit me.

Now, when you have completed for our brethren the translation you have commenced, I beg that you will come to me, but not with the hope of deriving any advantage from your visit as regards your studies; for my time is, as I have shown you, excessively occupied.

The end came on December 13, 1204, when Maimonides died in his seventieth year.[87] A general outburst of grief ensued. Public mourning was ordained in many congregations in all parts of the world. For three days Jews and Mos-

lems held lament in Fostat. Maimonides was buried in Palestine, at Tiberias. In Jerusalem a general fast was proclaimed. From the Scroll of the Law was read the passage (Leviticus xxvi.) in which are unfolded the penalties resulting from disobedience to the divine precepts, and from the first Book of Samuel, the narrative of the capture of the Ark of the Covenant by the Philistines, concluding with the words (1 Samuel iv. 22): "The glory is departed from Israel, for the Ark of God is taken."

CHAPTER XII

The Influence of Maimonides

The first effect of the life-work of Maimonides was a cleavage in Jewish opinion. But this cleavage was in no sense a disintegration. In the end, both his *Code* and his *Guide* were adopted as textbooks by conservatives and liberals alike. Were it not that the cleft between men of simple faith and men given to philosophical apprehension of religion is perennially recurrent, the struggle between Maimonists and anti-Maimonists would strike the modern reader as trivial and obsolete. Though, however, such conflicts are chronic in human life, every age agrees in calm compromise on the doubts that assailed its predecessor, reserving its own excitement for its more immediate problems. Both Maimonists and anti-Mai-

monists exaggerated their differences. On the one hand were the enthusiastic worshippers of the master who could see truth in him alone; on the other side stood an equally convinced party of opponents who denounced the teachings of Maimonides as heretical. There were unpleasant features in the struggle, but these and not the good results were ephemeral. The medieval weapon of excommunication was freely used, and the incriminated books were committed to the pyre in an unavailing attempt "to quench the flame of truth with fire." An appeal was made to the secular arm, and Dominicans were invited to decide questions affecting the most intimate concerns of Judaism.

This is ancient history, in the sense that it has left no disfiguring mark. The good that these men did lived after them, the evil was buried with their bones. The triumph of Maimonides was complete all along the line. But the opposite party

gained something for which it contended. The philosophical conception of Judaism was allowed a high place in the schools, but Judaism was not merged into Rationalism. This was due to the anti-Maimonists, while the medieval Kabbala (or mysticism) applied to the Jewish religion that touch of emotion which Maimonides so conspicuously lacked. Again, the aim of Maimonides to provide a Code which should form a final court of appeal in Jewish life was unsuccessful. Into Spain itself, the French methods of studying the Talmud were introduced in the century following the death of Maimonides. So far from destroying *pilpul*—casuistical discussion—the *Code*, or *Mishneh-Torah*, itself became the object of pilpulistic comment. This was to the advantage of Judaism. Pilpul is to law as laboratory work to science.

Despite these facts, it is nevertheless accurate to assert that Maimonides won

all along the line. Whereas before his day the philosophical study of Judaism had numbered but a handful of adherents, the band of such students has always been large and powerful since the completion of the *Guide*. If, again, the Kabbala did good, it was because the sane influence of Maimonides prevented the harm which, but for him, might have ensued. For Maimonides not only introduced an intellectual principle. He also applied a spiritualising principle. The grossness, the materialism of medieval religion could not survive the idealism of the *Guide*. Especially in the face of the Kabbala, the antagonism of Maimonides to an anthropomorphic conception of God saved Judaism from succumbing to the alluring, sensuous charms, inseparable from mysticism. So, too, the *Code* had a permanent value. Not only has it been the means by which Judaism has become known to Europe, but it supplied to those

within the pale a rallying point amid the troubles that were soon to befall the Jewish people. If the Torah remained a badge of honour which prevailed over the badge of shame imposed by Innocent III; if the physical walls of the coming ghetto made no prison for the Jewish spirit; if the varying degrees of persecution applied by local governments failed to produce a permanent disintegration of Judaism into a number of local cults; then to Maimonides and his *Code* belongs a large share of the merit. From the *Mishneh-Torah* to the *Shulchan Aruch*—the Code which now regulates the life of the majority of Jews—the direct genealogical line is unbroken, and though the parent is in many ways superior to the descendant, still the value of the latter as a norm for Jewish life must not be depreciated because its effects have not been all good.

The influence of Maimonides on European thought in general is greater than

is usually allowed. It is becoming clearer that the *Guide* was very early known through translations. Apart from this, there is nothing more characteristic of the middle ages than the easy flow of influence between the representatives of various schools and creeds. In the sphere of philosophy, for instance, no distinction can be drawn between Christians, Moslems, and Jews as such. The spirit of Greece enjoyed a threefold revival, leading a new life in Arabic, Latin, and Hebrew.[88] What is more, the three channels often ran together and intermingled, they did not merely start from the same fount. The scholars of the Mosque, Church, and Synagogue worked in the same studies, and some remarkable cases of collaboration might be cited. The books of Jewish writers, known under Latinised names, were often used by Christian students. But we are now dealing only with Maimonides. His Biblical

exegesis, as expounded in the opening chapters of the *Guide*, was epoch-making, as Professor Bacher has shown.[89] His *Commentary on the Mishnah* gains yearly in repute, and one of the most interesting phenomena of the last quarter of the nineteenth century has been the activity displayed by Jewish scholars in editing the *Siraj*. To return to the *Guide*, Maimonides' doctrine that God cannot be defined attributively, but only negatively, has been of permanent moment in the philosophy of monotheism. His account of the Mohammedan Kalam, with which the first part closes, has been found by scientific historians one of the most useful and keen examinations of the Islamic afterglow of the ancient atomic theories. His rejection of the Aristotelian doctrine of the eternity of the world helped Christians to use Aristotle in their theology.[90] His psychological analysis of prophecy has worth even for present-day inquirers.

The *Guide* was written in Arabic, but in Hebrew characters, and it is said that the author objected to its transcription into Arabic script.[91] But we know that such transcriptions were soon made. ʿAbd-el-Latif read it; and citations of it are found in the works of Moslem philosophers. Moslem commentaries were written on parts of the *Guide*; Moslem teachers lectured on the work to their students; and to a Moslem historian of medicine, Alkifti, the *Guide* represented the highest product of his age. Of the translations of the *Guide*, Samuel ibn Tibbon's is the more noted. It was completed in Arles in 1204, a fortnight before Maimonides died. Of the influence of this translation on Jewish thought and on the language in which that thought expressed itself, it is impossible to speak with exaggeration. But another translation, that made a little later by Judah al-Charizi, though inferior in excellence (except in

so far as style is concerned) to Ibn Tibbon's was more important from our present point of view. For it was from Charizi's Hebrew that the first Latin translation was made during the first half of the thirteenth century.[92] Alexander of Hales, the great Franciscan, who died in 1245, shows traces of acquaintance with the *Guide*, while his contemporary, William of Auvergne, was even more deeply influenced by it. From Maimonides, William derived his whole knowledge of Judaism. But the real influence of the *Guide* on Christian thought begins with the Dominican Albertus Magnus (died 1280).[93] Albertus Magnus cited "Moyses Aegyptius," but Maimonides was more to the Dominican than would appear from these citations taken alone. As regards Thomas Aquinas, "his dependence on Maimonides," says Guttmann,[94] "is not confined to philosophical details, but in a certain sense may be detected in the

whole of his theological system." As Emile Saisset puts it: "Maimonides est le précurseur de Saint Thomas d'Aquin, et le Moré Neboukhim annonce et prépare la summa theologiæ."[95] If the *Guide* of the Jew and the *Summa* of the Christian bear this relation, then Maimonides deserves a place among the fathers of the Church. The Encyclopedist of the middle ages, Vincent of Beauvais, makes use of the *Guide* in his *Speculum Majus*.[96] Duns Scotus, too, knew the *Guide*, and held its teachings in esteem.[97] Of the later Latin translations, of the renderings into Castilian, Italian, and other languages of Europe, it is unnecessary to speak. Suffice it to say in general, that the *Guide*, while it ceased directly to affect European thought after the age of Descartes, was a potent force in Judaism at various epochs. Elias del Medigo, the first great product of the Italian and Judaic spirit, the teacher of Pico di Mirandola, was

inspired by Maimonides; in Poland, in the sixteenth century, the Jewish revival owed much to the same influence; in Moses Mendelssohn Maimonides produced an intellectual awakening; while Isaac Erter, one of the prime movers in the Hebrew renaissance of the nineteenth century, was much affected by the *Guide*.[98] Solomon Maimon, the brilliant, the wayward admirer and critic of the *Guide*, recognised in the man whose name he adopted the most powerful influence on his mental development. "My reverence for this great teacher," he writes, "went so far that I regarded him as my ideal of a perfect man. I looked upon his teachings as if they had been inspired with divine wisdom itself. This went so far that when my passions began to grow, and I had sometimes to fear lest they might seduce me to some action inconsistent with these teachings, I used to employ as a proved antidote the abjuration: 'I

swear by the reverence which I owe my great teacher, Rabbi Moses ben Maimon, not to do this act.' And this vow, so far as I can remember, was always sufficient to restrain me." [99]

Spinoza, of whose intellectual relation to Maimonides very opposite views are maintained, paid to the Cairo Rabbi the homage of practical imitation. As Professor Pearson well says: "Maimonides' theory of how a wise man should earn his livelihood seems to me the keynote of Spinoza's life by the optical bench—his refusal of a professorial chair. 'Let,' writes Maimonides, 'thy fixed occupation be the study of the Law, and thy wordly pursuits be of secondary consideration!' After stating that all business is only a means to study, in that it provides the necessities of life, he continues: 'He who resolves upon occupying himself solely with the study of the Law, not attending to any work or trade but living on char-

ity, defiles the sacred name and heaps up contumely upon the Law. Study must have active labour joined with it, or it is worthless, produces sin, and leads the man to injure his neighbour. . . . It is a cardinal virtue to live by the work of one's hands, and it is one of the great characteristics of the pious of yore, even that whereby one attains to all respect and felicity of this and the future world.' Why," asks Professor Pearson, "does Spinoza's life stand in such contrast to that of all other modern philosophers? Because his life at least, if not his philosophy, was Hebrew!" [100]

A valuable testimony this to any teacher's influence. Both Solomon Maimon and Spinoza were affected in their lives as well as in their mind by Maimonides, and the same may be said of the Jewish people as a whole. Maimonides taught his brethren how to think; he showed them how to live. Few men have been so little

spoiled by success, so little embittered by opposition. Amid praise and blame he stood calm, unflinching. His life was actuated by a consistent purpose. He sowed the ideal, and he won the most priceless of rewards when he in turn became the ideal of many, leading them ever onwards to a higher conception of God and of man's place in the divine universe.

NOTES

1. The account of Cordova and the history of Andalusia from the reign of Abd-er-Rahman III (912-961) till 1148 are mainly derived (and in part quoted) from Stanley Lane-Poole's *The Moors in Spain*, London, 1887. See particularly pp. 131, 139, 152, 169, 181, 184.

2. Maimonides gives this pedigree at the end of his *Commentary on the Mishnah*. In Arabic he was called "Abu imran (Amram) Musa ben Maimun abd (Obeid) allah" the Cordovese. Christians cite him as Moses the Egyptian from his subsequent residence in Cairo. His usual Hebrew title is either Maimuni or Rambam, the latter being formed from the initials of *R*abbi *M*oses *b*en *M*aimon (Rabbi Moses the son of Maimon). On his father, Maimon ben Joseph, see, in addition to the usual authorities for the period, L. M. Simmons' Introduction to *The Letter of Consolation of Maimun ben Joseph, edited from the unique Bodleian MS., and translated into English.* (*Jewish Quarterly Review*, 1890, vol. ii. p. 62 *seq.*)

3. The "Confession of Faith" of the Almohades, and some of the comments on it, are taken from the English translation contributed by L. M. Simmons to the *Jewish Quarterly Review*, vol. iii. p. 360. The Arabic text was published by I. Goldziher in *ZDMG*, vol. xliv. p. 168.

4. The *best names* "are the ninety-nine attributes of God which Moslems are in the habit of

reciting. They are given and translated into English in Palmer's *Qur'an*, vol. i. Introduction lxvii " (*J. Q. R.* iii. 362).

5. Geiger in his *Moses ben Maimon* (*Nachgelassene Schriften*, iii. p. 42) holds that the family of Maimon assumed the outward garb of Islam in Spain. The assumption is unfounded. Graetz, who too readily assumes that this occurred later on in Fez, fully acquits Maimon of yielding in Spain. See on this whole question notes 9 and 14 below.

6. On this astronomical work see Steinschneider, *Hebräische Uebersetzungen*, § 377.

7. Harkavy thinks that it cannot be maintained that Maimonides had no predecessors in commenting on the Mishnah, but as to the originality of Maimonides' method there can be no question (Hebrew ed. of Graetz, iv. Appendix, p. 52).

8. The motive suggested by Sambary (Neubauer, *Medieval Jewish Chronicles*, i. p. 117) is incredible. He states that Maimonides was forced to leave Cordova because of some offensive remarks made by him to the Khalif regarding Moslem rites. Maimonides was too tolerant to Islam for this story to be admissible.

9. The view expressed in the text seems best to fit the evidence. Geiger, Munk (*Notice sur Joseph ben Jehouda*, 1842, and *Archives Israélites*, 1851, p. 319), and Graetz emphatically maintain that Maimonides actually became a pseudo-Moslem, basing the opinion partly on general considerations, partly on the statements of Arabic authors. The question is fully examined, as to the first class of arguments, by Dr. M. Friedländer (Preface to *Guide of*

the Perplexed, vol. i. p. xxxiii), and as to the latter class by Professor Margoliouth (*Jewish Quarterly Review*, vol. xiii. p. 539). Both vindicate Maimonides against the suspicion that he ever assumed the garb of Islam. See also Lebrecht, *Magazin für die Lit. des Auslandes* (1844, n. 62); H. Kahan's *Hat Moses Maimonides dem Krypto-Mohammedanismus gehuldigt?* (1899); and Rabbinowitz in the Hebrew ed. of Graetz, vol. iv. pp. 332, 462, and the references there given.

10. Simmons, *Maimonides and Islam* (*Jewish Chronicle* Office, 1888), p. 4.

11. On the Arabic text of Maimon's *Letter of Consolation* see note 2 above. A Hebrew translation was published by Goldberg in the *Lebanon*, 1872. The citations and some of the comments are taken from Mr. Simmons' English edition. As to the Arabic style of Maimonides in general, and its relation to Moslem Arabic dialects, see I. Friedländer, *Der Sprachgebrauch des Maimonides* (Frankfort, 1902).

12. Introduction to the *Siraj; cf.* p. 75.

13. The *Letter concerning Apostasy* was edited by Geiger (Breslau, 1850) and Edelmann (*Chemdah Genuza*, p. 6); also in the *Letters* of Maimonides (Leipzig, 1867). *Cf.* Hebrew Graetz, iv. p. 337, n. 1. The authenticity of the Letter has been disputed (see in particular Friedländer, *loc. cit.*), but on the other side, besides Graetz and Geiger, see Simmons' *Maimonides and Islam*, p. 5, and Margoliouth, *loc. cit.* The author must have been a person of consequence, and no one but Maimonides has ever been suggested. The Letter is cited as Maimon-

ides' by Saadiah ibn Danon, Isaac ben Sheshet (*Responsa*, § 11), and Simon ben Zemach Duran (*Responsa*, § 63). The views expressed in the Letter bear a general resemblance to the known views of Maimonides, and there is some striking similarity between the phraseology of this Letter and the incontestably genuine *Iggereth Teman* (see note 36 below). The *Letter concerning Apostasy* by no means implies that Maimonides was himself a pseudo-convert, as Munk, Carmoly, and Graetz aver. Professor Margoliouth rightly says: "The fact of the writer's taking a lenient view of the act of pronouncing the Mohammedan profession of faith, and thinking the matter not one worth dying for, surely need not prove that he had himself followed that course."

14. This is an inference from the course of events; without this supposition it is difficult to understand what occurred.

15. See the *Sefer Charedim* of Eleazar Askari of Safed (written in 1588).

16. For the career of Saladin and the history of Egypt in the latter half of the 12th century, two brilliant books by Professor Stanley Lane-Poole are particularly valuable: (*a*) *Saladin and the Fall of the Kingdom of Jerusalem*, 1898, and (*b*) *A History of Egypt, the Middle Ages*, 1901 (vol. vi. of the *History of Egypt*, edited by Professor W. M. Flinders Petrie).

17. Maimonides' views on the treatment of the Karaites are derived from his *Responsa*, 71, and *Letters*, 48*b* (ed. Leipzig, §§ 163 and 58).

18. *Responsa*, § 149.

19. Maimonides' *Letter* to Japhet (note 21 below); *cf.* Casici, *Bibliotheca Arabicohispana*, i. 293*a*.

20. See for instance Commentary on *Mishnah Aboth*, iv. 5, on the maxim: "Make not of the Torah a crown wherewith to aggrandise thyself, nor a spade wherewith to dig."

21. This Letter to Japhet, written eight years after the death of his brother David, is published in the Hebrew Graetz, iv. p. 338, n. 4. In this letter he refers, among other matters, to the dangers he incurred through informers.

22. Lane-Poole, *History of Egypt*, p. 184.

23. A Hebrew version of the general introduction and the first five tractates was made by Charizi, and of the "Eight Chapters" by Samuel ibn Tibbon, but the translation of the whole Commentary was not complete till a century had elapsed (Steinschneider, *Hebräische Uebersetzungen*, p. 923). Since 1523 the Commentary has been printed in numerous editions of the Talmud. Surenhusius translated the Commentary into Latin (1698-1703). Of the original Arabic many parts have now been edited. See Pococke, *Porta Mosis* (1655), Barth (*Makkoth*, 1879-80), Dérenbourg (*Tohoroth*, 1886-92), Baneth (*Aboth*, 1890), Friedländer (*Rosh Hashanah*, 1890), Weil (*Berachoth*, 1891), Bamberger (*Kilajim*, 1891), Zivi (*Demai*, 1891), Weiss (*Sanhedrin*, 1893), Herzog (*Peah*, 1894), Wohl (*Chullin*, iii.-v., 1894), Wiener (*Abodah Zarah*, 1895), Bamberger (*Challah*, 1895), Beermann (*Eduyoth*, i. 1-12, 1897), Löwenstein (*Bechoroth*, 1897), Fromer (*Middoth*, 1898), Holzer (Introduction to *Chelek*, 1901), Behrens (*Megillah*, 1901),

Kroner (*Bezah*, 1901), Kroner (*Pesachim*, 1901), Hirschfeld (*Joma*, 1902), Sik (*Taanith*, 1902), Kallner (*Taanith*, i.-ii., 1902), Nurock (*Kiddushin*, 1902), Hamburger (*Introduction*, 1902), J. Simon (*Moed Katan* and *Sabbath*, v.-vii., 1902), M. Fried (*Tamid*, 1903).

24. In his Introduction to his *Magen Aboth*, a commentary on *Mishnah Aboth*.

25. Weiss, *Dor Dor Vedoreshaw*, iv. 293; but contrast the remarks of Rabbinowitz, Hebrew Graetz, iv. p. 341. Frankel's appreciation of Maimonides' Commentary may be found in *Darche Hamishnah*, p. 320. Frankel holds that Maimonides only dissents from the Talmud where the practical law is not affected.

26. Introduction to *Chelek*.

27. Preface to *Guide of the Perplexed*, p. xx.

28. On the *Shemoneh Perakim* ("Eight Chapters"), see Steinschneider, *Hebr. Uebersetz.*, § 254. A Hebrew translation was made by Samuel ibn Tibbon; the original was edited with a German translation by Wolf (1863). The Hebrew has been often edited. An English translation appeared in the *Hebrew Review* (1835).

29. Grant, *Ethics of Aristotle*, vol. i. p. 261.

30. Just as Maimonides sought to give an Aristotelian form to Jewish ethics, so Professor M. Lazarus, in his "Ethics of Judaism," has endeavoured to read into the same ethics the principles of Kant.

31. The latest edition is J. Holzer's *Mose Maimuni's Einleitung zu Chelek*, 1901.

32. *Studies in Judaism*, 1896, chapter on "The Dogmas of Judaism."

33. In the prose summary and in the hymn *Yigdal*. See Singer, *Authorised Daily Prayer-Book*, pages 2 and 89.

34. Lane-Poole, *Saladin*, p. 106.

35. The *Iggereth Teman* was translated into Hebrew thrice: by Samuel ibn Tibbon, Abraham ben Chasdai of Barcelona, and Nahum of the Maghreb. The rendering of the last named is the one mostly printed. Ibn Tibbon's translation appeared in Vienna in 1874. The Letter was written in 1172.

36. With curious inconsistency the Letter contains a calculation of the same kind that Maimonides condemns. This passage fixes 1216 as the date of the Messianic era; but this part of the *Letter* is probably spurious (see Friedländer, p. xxiii., *cf.* Hebrew Graetz, p. 348, n. 2).

37. Nachmanides in his Letter to the French Rabbis (Frankel's *Monatsschrift*, 1860, 184).

38. *Responsa*, 140, 146.

39. Of the *Responsa* of Maimonides several collections have been published, the edition mostly cited being that issued in Leipzig, 1859. Some facsimiles of the Arabic *Responsa* (with the autograph of Maimonides) were published by G. Margoliouth in the *Jewish Quarterly Review*, vol. xi. p. 533. Geiger published five in the original Arabic (*Melo Chafnaim*, pp. 54-80). On these Arabic *Responsa* compare Simonsen, *Jewish Quarterly Review*, xii. 134. The Hebrew translation is due to Mordecai Tama. One hundred and fifty-five *Responsa* were published in Amsterdam in 1765. The Leipzig edition contains a larger number, some of doubtful authenticity.

40. *Jewish Quarterly Review*, xi. 536.

41. *Responsa* (Leipzig), ii. 15.

42. Further extracts from the *Responsa* are given in the Hebrew Graetz, iv. pp. 349 *seq.*

43. *Eben Sappir*, i. 19.

44. *Responsa*, Leipzig, i. 116. For fuller references see Hebrew Graetz, iv. p. 352, n. 1, and Appendix, pp. 51, 54, 55. In marriage contracts the condition as to obedience to the Rabbanite laws of *tebilah* (bathing) was specially added in Egypt. See also *Jewish Quarterly Review* (vol. xiii. 218) for a pre-Maimonist Egyptian marriage settlement. The mutual concessions include that the Rabbanite husband is not to compel his bride to make use of a light on Friday eve, or to profane the festivals according to the Karaite calculation, while the Karaite lady promises on her side to observe also the festivals as fixed by the Rabbanite calendar.

45. Lane-Poole, *History of Egypt*, p. 190.

46. *Ibid.* p. 204. The whole of chapter vii. in Professor Lane-Poole's *History* has been much utilised.

47. Maimonides himself states (in his Letter to Jonathan of Lunel) that he was occupied for ten years with the *Code*. See Hebrew Graetz, iv. 353, notes 1 and 2, and pp. 462, 466. One of the grounds for selecting the title *Yad Hachazaka* for the *Code*, was the numerical coincidence of the Hebrew letters of the word *Yad* (10 + 4) with the number of the books (14) into which the *Code* is divided.

48. The translators of the *Sefer Hamitzvoth* were Abraham ibn Chasdai, Moses ibn Tibbon, Solo-

mon ibn Ayyub. See Steinschneider, *Hebr. Uebersetz.*, p. 927. The Arabic text was published by Bloch, and much help has been derived from his introduction. His edition bears the title: *Le Livre des Préceptes par Moïse ben Maimoun dit Maimonide publié pour la première fois dans l'original arabe et accompagné d'une introduction et de notes* (Paris, 1888). Peritz had previously published a portion of the Arabic in 1882. The Hebrew translation of Ibn Tibbon is the most often printed.

49. Maimonides' Letters to Aknin and to Jonathan of Lunel; also the introduction to the *Code*. In his Letter to Phineas ben Meshullam of Alexandria (*Resp.*, 148) Maimonides disclaims any desire to suppress the study of the Talmud in the original.

50. On the *Rabad* see Weiss, *op. cit.* iv. p. 300, and Hebrew Graetz, iv. p. 415.

51. But an Arabic commentary was written on it. See *A Muhammedan Commentary on Maimonides' "Mishneh Torah"* by G. Margoliouth (*Jewish Quarterly Review*, xiii. 488, *cf.* Steinschneider, *ibid.* xii. p. 500). The Mohammedan origin of this Commentary is open to question.

52. This characterisation, together with a good deal more in the course of the present book, is taken bodily from Graetz.

53. Letter to Aaron of Lunel; *cf.* Harkavy in Hebrew Graetz, iv. p. 55 (n. to p. 368).

54. Letter to Jonathan of Lunel; Hebrew Graetz, iv. p. 353, n. 2.

55. *Responsa*, 140.

56. See note 50 above.

57. This view of the conduct of Samuel ben Ali is not universally accepted. See, on the other side, Harkavy in Hebrew Graetz, iv., Appendix, pp. 46 and 56. Samuel according to Harkavy displays much acumen and learning in some of his Responsa, but Maimonides certainly formed a low estimate of the Exilarch's philosophical attainments, and the view taken by Graetz of the motives of Samuel's opposition to Maimonides seems the true one.

58. Letter to Aknin.

59. The following note is extracted from Dr. Friedländer's edition of the *Guide of the Perplexed*, i. 1 (*cf.* also Hebrew Graetz, iv. 373, n. 1).

Munk, in his *Notice sur Joseph Ben-Jehoudah ou Aboul Hadjadj Yousouf Ben-Yahja al Sabti al Maghrebi* (Paris, 1842), described the life of this pupil of Maimonides. The following are the principal facts: Joseph ben Jehudah was born in the Maghreb about the middle of the twelfth century. Although his father was forced to conform to the religious practices of the Mohammedans, Joseph was taught Hebrew and trained in the study of Hebrew literature. He left his native country about 1185, and went to Egypt, where he continued his scientific pursuits under the tuition of Maimonides, who instructed him in mathematics, astronomy, philosophy, and theology. Afterwards (1187) he resided at Aleppo [comp. n. 60 below], and married Sarah, the daughter of Abu'l Ala. After a successful journey to India, he devoted himself chiefly to science, and delivered lectures on various subjects to numerous audiences. He

practised as physician to the Emir Faris ad-din Maimun-al-Karsi, and to the King Ed-Dhahir Ghazi, son of Saladin. The Vizir Djemal al-din el-Kofti was his intimate friend. When Charizi came to Aleppo, he found Joseph in the zenith of his career. His poetical talents are praised by Charizi in the eighteenth chapter of the *Tachkemoni*, and in the fiftieth chapter his unparalleled generosity is mentioned. Of his poetical productions, one is named by Charizi (ch. xviii.), and others are referred to by Maimonides in the *Guide*. A Bodleian MS. (Uri, 341) contains a work on the Medicine of the Soul [according to Steinschneider by the same Aknin]. . . . . Besides this, Aknin wrote a commentary on the Song of Songs and a treatise on the measures mentioned in the Talmud.

60. For the evidence that these incidents occurred in *Bagdad* see Yellin's Hebrew *Maimonides* (1898), p. 67, n. 1. The reader is referred to that work for other discussions not included in the present biography.

61. Munk, *Notice*, &c.; Azariah de Rossi, *Meor Enayim*, end of ch. xxv.; Yellin, *op. cit.*, p. 72, n. 1.

62. *The Crusades* ("Story of the Nations" Series), p. 305.

63. Lane-Poole, *History of Egypt*, p. 208.

64. *Ibid.*, p. 211.

65. Lane-Poole, *Saladin*, p. 328, from Baha-ed-din, 275.

66. *History of Egypt*, p. 212.

67. This statement is derived from Alkifti; the very probable identification of Richard I with the "King of the Franks at Ascalon" is due to Graetz.

68. On the medical works of Maimonides see Steinschneider, *Heb. Uebersetz.*, § 481 *seq.*; Hebrew Graetz, iv. 374-5 (with notes), and Appendix, p. 57; Yellin, Hebrew *Maimonides*, p. 73, text and notes.

69. Munk, *Notice*, p. 29.

70. Charizi, *Tachkemoni*, ch. xxix.

71. For the statement of Alkifti and Dscheli see Munk, *Archives Israélites*, 1881, p. 329; compare references in note 9 above.

72. Philo, Josephus, Eusebius (*Prep. Ev.* ix. 3), and Arab authors all repeat this theory. See the references in Buxtorff (end of his edition of the *Cusari*), Munk (*Mélanges*, p. 466), and Jellinek (in *Contros Havichuach*). These facts are collected by Harkavy, Appendix to Hebrew Graetz, iv. p. 57.

73. These sentences are aptly used by Dr. Friedländer as the motto to his translation of the *Guide*. See next note.

74. The quotations from the *Guide* are mostly derived from Dr. Friedländer's English translation (London, 1881-85). The original Arabic, *Dalalat al ḥaïrin*, was published with a French translation by Munk (Paris, 1850-1866), his work being entitled *Le Guide des Égarés*. The Arabic MSS. of the *Guide* are enumerated by Dr. Friedländer, *op. cit.* iii. p. ix. *seq.* The *Guide* is mostly cited by its Hebrew title, *Moreh Nebuchim*.

75. Spinoza, *Theologico-Political Treatise*, ch. vii., severely criticises this principle of Maimonides. "Harmful, useless, absurd," he terms it, but it is clear that he did not fully realise the inwardness of the theory that he was denouncing.

76. Several passages in this account of the *Guide*

are repeated from an article by I. Abrahams in *Mind*, xi. p. 97 *seq.* The reader is referred to the same article for some further discussions of Maimonides' logical method.

77. For an interesting illustration of this see Hirschfeld, *Mohammedan Criticism of the Bible* (*Jewish Quarterly Review*, xiii. p. 222 *seq.*).

78. On the philosophical import of Maimonides' theory of the divine attributes see Kaufmann, *Geschichte der Attributenlehre in der jüdischen Religionsphilosophie des Mittelalters*, 1877, p. 428 *seq.*

79. Friedländer, Analysis, *Guide*, vol. i. p. lxv.

80. Nachmanides opposed this view strongly. See Friedländer, *ad loc.*

81. Lane-Poole, *History of Egypt*, ch. viii.

82. *Ibid.*, p. 241.

83. *Commentary on Sanhedrin*, x. 1; *Aboth*, i. (end). Maimonides had no great affection even for liturgical poems (Geiger, *Melo Chafnaim*, p. 79). Compare Hebrew Graetz, iv. 330, Appendix, 52.

84. For the evidence of this see Yellin, Hebrew *Maimonides*, p. 97, n. 1.

85. Munk, *Notice*, p. 23. The Essay on the Resurrection was translated into Hebrew by Samuel ibn Tibbon, and also by Charizi. See Steinschneider, *Hebr. Uebersetz.*, 431.

86. An English translation of the Letter by Dr. H. Adler may be found in *Miscellany of Hebrew Literature*, vol. i. (1872). The extract given below is cited from this rendering.

87. Saadiah ibn Danon in *Chemdah Genuza*, p. 30; Jedaiah Bedaressi, end of *Bechinath Olam; Yochasin*, ed. Cracow, p. 131; Hebrew Graetz, iv. p.

418. The poems in honour of Maimonides are collected by Steinschneider in his *Kobetz-al-Yad* for the Society Mekitse Nirdamim.

88. Kaufmann, essay cited in note 92 below, p. 336.

89. Bacher, *Die Bibelexegese Moses Maimuni's*, 1897; *cf.* also Goldberger, *Die Allegorie in ihrer exegetischen Anwendung bei Moses Maimonides*, 1902.

90. Guttmann, *Die Scholastik des dreizehnten Jahrhunderts*, 1902, p. 10.

91. All extant copies of the Arabic original are certainly in Hebrew characters, but Ibn Tibbon used a copy in Arabic characters. (See Friedländer, *Guide*, i. p. xxx, n. 2.)

92. See Steinschneider, *Hebr. Uebersetz.*, p. 432. On the translations in general see Friedländer, *Guide*, vol. iii. pp. xi. *seq.*, and Kaufmann, *Der Führer Maimuni's in der Weltlitteratur* (*Archiv für Geschichte der Philosophie*, xi. pp. 335 *seq.*) Dr. Friedländer also gives a long list of commentaries and works on the *Guide*.

93. M. Joel, *Verhältniss Albert des Grossen zu Moses Maimonides*, 1863; Guttmann, *Die Scholastik*, p. 85.

94. Guttmann, *Das Verhältniss des Thomas von Aquina zum Judenthum*, 1891, pp. 31 *seq.*

95. Saisset, *Maimonide et Spinoza*, in *Revue des Deux Mondes*, 1862.

96. Guttmann in Brann-Kaufmann's *Monatsschrift*, vol. xxxix., 207; *Die Scholastik*, p. 121.

97. Guttmann, *ibid.*, vol. xxxviii., 37; *Die Scholastik*, p. 154.

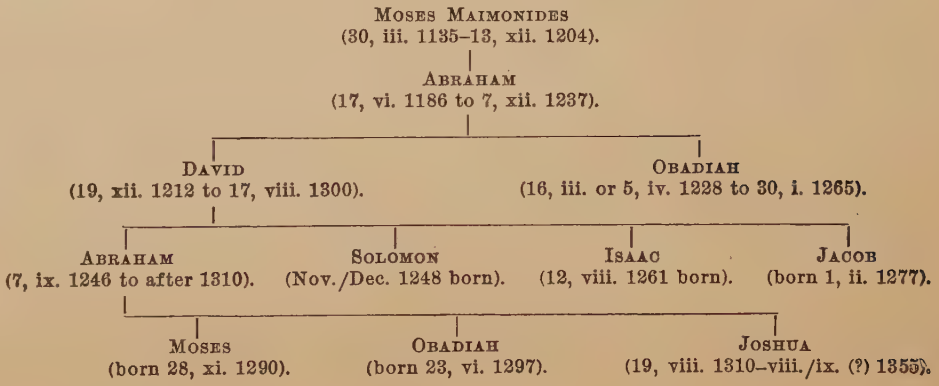
98. These facts may be found in the later volumes of Graetz.

99. Solomon Maimon's *Lebensgeschichte*, ii. p. 3; J. C. Murray, *Solomon Maimon: an Autobiography*, 1888, p. xiv. n.

100. Karl Pearson, *Maimonides and Spinoza*, in *Mind*, vol. viii. pp. 339 *seq.* Pearson finds the parallel to many of Spinoza's characteristic doctrines in the works of Maimonides, especially in the *Code*. "I wished," he says, "to show that the study of Maimonides was traceable even in Spinoza's most finished exposition of his philosophy" (p. 352). So, too, M. Joel (*Zur Genesis der Lehre Spinoza's*, 1871) says, p. 6: "Not merely in his youth, but in his maturity, Spinoza was affected by Jewish thought, and among its exponents by Maimonides."

GENEALOGICAL TABLE

On the basis of a critical study of Joseph Sambary's Chronicle (see note 8, above), Dr. M. Brann has drawn up the following Table (*Monatsschrift*, vol. xliv., 1900, p. 24):—



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